



Dan River Region Social Capital Survey

FINAL REPORT OF RESULTS 2011

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Dan River Region Social Capital Survey 2011

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures	ii
List of Tables.....	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Executive Summary	vii
I. Introduction and Summary of Methods	viii
II. Quality of Life in the Dan River Region	7
III. Community Attachment	11
IV. Civic Participation.....	19
V. Political Participation	25
VI. People in the Economy.....	30
VII. Children and Schools	36
VIII. Health Issues.....	40
IX. Summary and Conclusion	44
Appendix A: <i>Questionnaire</i>	
Appendix B: <i>Survey and Sampling Methodology</i>	
Appendix C: <i>Crosstabulations/Mean Ratings by the Demographic Variables</i>	
Appendix D: <i>Frequencies</i>	
Appendix E: <i>Comparisons Across Years</i>	
Appendix F: <i>Openends</i>	

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure I-1: Dan River Regional Area ix

Figure I-2: Age of Respondents 4

Figure I-3: Race of Respondents 4

Figure I-4: Employment 5

Figure I-5: Household Income..... 5

Figure I-6: Educational Level..... 6

Figure I-7: Geographic Distribution 6

Figure II-1: Overall Quality of Life Ratings 7

Figure II-2: Overall Quality of Life Five Years Ago 8

Figure II-3: Overall Quality of Life Five Years from Now..... 8

Figure II-4: Mean Overall Quality of Life Ratings by Area..... 9

Figure III-1: Important to Feel a Part of the Community 11

Figure III-2: Feel at Home Where I Live 12

Figure III-3: Have a Lot in Common with People Who Live in this Community..... 12

Figure III-4: Feel it is Important to Live in this Particular Area 12

Figure III-5: Neighbors You Know 13

Figure III-6: Impact in Making the Community a Better Place to Live 13

Figure III-7: Safety in the Neighborhood..... 14

Figure III-8: Safety in Shopping Areas 15

Figure III-9: Safety at Home and in Schools..... 16

Figure IV-1: Religious Service Attendance..... 19

Figure IV-2: Religious Service Attendance: Comparison to National Data..... 20

Figure IV-3: Group Memberships 21

Figure IV-4: Types of Volunteering..... 22

Figure IV-5: Hours Volunteered per Month..... 22

Figure IV-6: Civic Skills 23

Figure V-1: Attend Public or Political Meetings..... 26

Figure V-2: Voted in City or Local Elections 27

Figure V-3: Participation in Political Activities 27

Figure V-4: Trust in Government..... 29

Figure VI-1: Employment 30

Figure VI-2: Hours Worked 31

Figure VI-3: Perceptions of Work..... 32

Figure VI-4: Reasons for Special Training..... 32

Figure VI-5: Affected by the Economic Situation.....	34
Figure VII-1: What is Best for Children.....	36
Figure VII-2: Hope Young Person Returns to Work and Raises Family	37
Figure VII-3: Change in Education Provided by Schools	37
Figure VII-4: Job Community is Doing Helping Children Prepare for Preschool	37
Figure VII-5: Challenges for Children and Youth.....	38
Figure VIII-1: Overall Health Status	40
Figure VIII-2: Health Comparison to One Year Ago.....	41
Figure VIII-3: Participation in Physical Activity	42
Figure VIII-4: Difficulty in Eating Healthy	42
Figure VIII-5: Obesity as Problem.....	42

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Dr. Thomas M. Guterbock, Director of the Center and Professor of Sociology, was the Principal Investigator for this study, and was involved in all phases of the project, including budgeting, questionnaire drafting, logistical planning, data coding, data analysis, and writing this report.

Dr. Karl N. Stauber, President and CEO of the Danville Regional Foundation, served as project manager and as primary point of contact between CSR and the Foundation on all aspects of the project. He participated actively in the design of the questionnaire and in suggesting revisions to the survey report.

At CSR, Deborah Rexrode, M.A., served as the Project Coordinator. Brice McKeever, Research Analyst, and Dr. Peter Furia, Project Manager, conducted the analysis and prepared the draft report of results. Deborah Rexrode and Dr. Guterbock assisted in editing and reviewing the report.

Mr. John Lee Holmes, Survey Operations Manager was responsible for supervising the data collection in the CATI lab and was responsible for writing the methods report.

The Center for Survey Research is responsible for any errors or omissions in this report. Questions may be directed to the Center for Survey Research, P.O. Box 400767, Charlottesville Virginia 22904-4767. CSR also may be reached by telephone at 434-243-5222; by electronic mail at surveys@virginia.edu, or via the World Wide Web at: <http://surveys.virginia.edu>

Executive Summary

The 2011 Dan River Region Social Capital Survey was conducted by the Center for Survey Research (CSR) at the University of Virginia, at the request of the Danville Regional Foundation. This telephone survey of 1,140 randomly selected individuals living in the City of Danville, Pittsylvania County and Caswell County, NC was conducted in the spring of 2011.

Overall, the purposes of this survey were:

- To measure how people feel about the region and their future in it
- To measure people's attachment to their community
- To measure the region's social capital which includes civic engagement, political involvement, and connectedness to the community and serves as an indication of community strength and vitality
- To compare current results with baseline results gathered in 2009.

Previous research has shown that a community with abundant social capital is better able to meet the economic needs of residents, defend the area's political interests, fend off external threats, and protect the quality of life of its residents. Specialists in community development have long recognized that if social capital can be strengthened in a community, then the capacity of that community to provide for its residents is enhanced. For all these reasons, it is important to the long-range plans of the Danville Regional Foundation, and the communities it serves, to better understand the state of social capital in the Dan River Region.

The 2009 survey established baseline numbers for measuring social capital in the Danville area. These results will be used in this report for comparisons between the two surveys.

Survey Results

Overall Quality of Life

Residents of the Dan River Region were asked to rate the overall quality of life in their community. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 represents the worst possible community in which to live, and 10 represents the best possible community, residents

of the Dan River Region gave a mean rating of 7.31. This rating suggests that residents have a high regard for the quality of life in the region. This rating is not statistically significant from the 2009 rating. More than half (50.8%) of respondents gave an "8" or better for their rating of Danville as a place to live.

Residents of Caswell County and Pittsylvania County rated the quality of life in their communities on average higher than those who live in Danville City (mean of 7.59 and 7.64 compared to 6.79). However, the gap between ratings in Danville and in the two counties narrowed between 2009 and 2011.

Community Attachment

Overall, the residents of the Dan River Region have a strong sense of community. They feel a sense of belonging and feel it is important for them to live in this particular area. Most residents have neighbors or relatives in their neighborhood or close by to support them. They also feel they have an impact in making their community a better place to live. Overall, the results of the 2011 survey show little change on most of the social indicators from the 2009 results.

Research suggests that how well a resident is attached to their community has a significant impact on their perceptions of the quality of life within the community. We created a community attachment index to measure how attached residents of the Dan River Region are to their community and to assess the impact that their community attachment has on the ratings of quality of life given by residents in the Dan River Region.

Eight variables in the survey were combined to form the community attachment index. For each of these eight questions where respondents answered "very important" or "strongly agree," one point was scored on the index for a total of up to eight points. Higher levels of community attachment were positively related to residents' perception of quality of life within the Dan River Region.

The community attachment index declined significantly from a mean of 4.16 in 2009 to a mean of 3.79 in 2011. Note that the index counts only the top categories on each of the opinion questions. The index declined primarily because there were significant drops in the number who

strongly agree that it is important to live in the area and important to feel a part of the community. When it comes to mean ratings on even these two indicators, however, the drops were considerably more modest.

Civic Participation

Residents of the Dan River Region are highly church-oriented. More than 50 percent (53.7%) of respondents said they attend religious services every week or almost every week, and only one out of ten indicated they seldom or never attend religious services.

Membership in community organizations was one measure of civic participation in this study. By far the most common type of organizational membership was religious organizations (65.7%). Other organization types in which people most frequently have membership are; health clubs, sports clubs, etc. (27.1%); hobby, garden, or recreation groups (24.0%); school support groups (23.4%); organizations for older people (29.7%); and professional and trade associations (22.4%). A total of 168 respondents (15.9%) indicated they do not belong to any of the groups. The only groups with a statistically significant membership change since the 2009 survey are the organizations for older people and civic or community organizations, both of which experienced a decline.

More than fifty percent (54.0%) of respondents said they have volunteered time to charities, schools, hospitals, religious organizations, neighborhood associations, and civic or other groups. Of those respondents who do volunteer, more than one-fourth (26.1%) of respondents to the 2011 survey said they volunteer 2 hours or less per month. Slightly less than that said they volunteer 3-5 hours per month (24.2%) or 6-10 hours per month (24.8%). One out of ten said they volunteer 11-20 hours per month (12.5%) or more than 20 hours per month (11.9%). However, about half of the overall sample has not recently volunteered at all.

Political Participation

Nearly nine in ten registered voters claimed that they voted in the 2010 election. Compared to 2009 respondents, who were asked if they voted in the 2008 presidential elections, these numbers show a statistically significant decline. This may be the

result of less interest in a mid-year election cycle. Overall, the residents of the Dan River Region are not as likely to participate in other types of political activities.

People in the Economy

Changes in employment throughout the Dan River Region were not statistically significant but it appears that fewer responders were working full time and more were working in part time positions, compared to those in the 2009 survey. One in five of the respondents said they work more than one paid job.

When respondents were asked about their perceptions of their work, the picture that emerges is of a somewhat underemployed labor force. Those who do have jobs, however, are highly engaged with their work and most find their jobs to be personally rewarding.

The economic situation of the country continues to have an impact on the Dan River Region. Significantly higher numbers of people in 2011 said they have been negatively impacted by the downturn in the economy than was expressed in 2009. More than half of the respondents said the higher cost of living was the main reason. One in five said they have had a loss or reduction in income.

Children and Schools

More than two-thirds (70.1%) of respondents said that the Dan River Region is a good place to raise children. Another two-thirds of respondents (67.6%) said when a child is ready to leave home, it is better for them to move to some other area. A new-for-2011 follow-up question asked whether respondents hoped that young people who moved away for other opportunities would return to the Danville area. Those responding “hope person returns” slightly outnumbered those responding “better to stay away.” (See Chapter 7.) Open-ended responses regarding the reasons for choosing “better to stay away” often involved concerns about a lack of job opportunities in the area. (See Appendix F.)

In the opinion of our respondents, the biggest challenge affecting children and youth in the Dan River Region is the lack of jobs. Respondents showed strong support for quality education and youth education programs to provide a better quality of life for their children and youth.

A new-for-2011 survey question about how well the community is helping prepare children for preschool elicited mixed responses. (See Chapter 7.) No significant change is evident, as yet, as a result of the work the community is doing in the area of early education to prepare children for school. It may take a couple of years for this to have a significant impact.

Conclusion

Any assessment of social capital in the Dan River Region must recognize that some forms of civic engagement are closely correlated with socio-economic status. In a region suffering from economic setbacks, lack of education and income among residents will have an effect on how involved they are in civic life. Newcomers to the community do not start out with strong community attachments; those ties take time to develop. Since this year's survey included a larger number of relative newcomers, our index of community attachment declined somewhat. Taking these factors into account, overall the level of social capital continues to be fairly strong in terms of community attachment, social connectedness and religious involvement, but in need of development in areas of civic engagement. There are some encouraging signs of change in the way residents perceive their quality of life, and in the growth of some key civic skills. This survey thus points to areas, subgroups and arenas of activity where the Dan River Region may be able to improve the level of civic engagement, the strength of social capital and hence the quality of life for its residents.

For the 2011 survey, points of particular interest include the following:

- Optimism about the region's future is increasing even as nostalgia about the region's past recedes. (See Chapter 2.)
- One specific indicator of community attachment – "it's important for me to feel a part of the community in which I live" – went down significantly. This is in part attributable to the decreasing length of residence in

Danville of the average survey respondent. (See Chapter 3.)

- Since 2009, there have been some positive changes in general perceptions of crime and personal safety (see Chapter 3) as well as in perceptions of the challenges to youth posed by gangs and drugs in schools (see Chapter 7).
- Various new as well as repeated questions on health issues (Chapter 8) suggest somewhat less concern with health issues than might be expected.

I. Introduction and Summary of Methods

Purpose

The 2011 Dan River Region Social Capital Survey was conducted by the Center for Survey Research (CSR) at the University of Virginia, at the request of the Danville Regional Foundation. This telephone survey of 1,140 randomly selected individuals living in Danville City, Pittsylvania County and Caswell County, NC was conducted in the spring of 2011.

Overall, the purposes of this survey were:

- To measure how people feel about the region and their future in it
- To measure people's attachment to their community
- To measure the region's social capital, which includes civic engagement, political involvement, and connectedness to the community and serves as an indication of community strength and vitality
- To compare current results with baseline results gathered in 2009.

Previous research has shown that a community that has abundant social capital is better able to meet the economic needs of residents, defend the area's political interests and protect the quality of life of its residents. Specialists in community development have long recognized that if social capital can be strengthened in a community, then the capacity of that community to provide for its residents is enhanced. For all these reasons, it is important to the long-range plans of the Danville Regional Foundation, and the communities it serves, to better understand the state of social capital in the Dan River Region.

The 2009 survey established baseline numbers for measuring social capital in the Danville area. These results will be used in this report for comparisons between the two surveys.

Many researchers have demonstrated that individuals as well as communities differ in their levels of social capital. It is clear that individuals with more social capital are more likely to be

active, engaged, successful, and satisfied with their lives.¹ In considering the survey results, it is important to keep in mind that some forms of social capital are closely tied to education and economic success. That is, education and income are highly associated with organizational memberships, volunteering, and charitable giving.² It is also well known from the research literature that socioeconomic status is strongly predictive of political participation.³ But social capital is not just for the elite and the well-off. The data suggests that several forms of commitment cut across socioeconomic categories in important ways and work to bring large segments of society, including the less privileged, into wider social contacts. Perhaps foremost among these is religious commitment: people who often attend religious services or show other strong religious behavior are much more likely to be socially involved, communally attached, to join organizations, and to volunteer.

A second correlate of broader social commitments is community attachment, which is nearly as common among persons of little means as it is among those in high-income suburbs. People with strong community attachment have higher levels of group membership, enhanced levels of social trust and trust in government, are more likely to volunteer, and are more politically involved.⁴ Both of these factors are important in understanding the patterns of social capital in an area like the Dan River Region, where average levels of income and education are not as high as in some other parts of Virginia.

¹ Andrew Kochera, Audrey Straight, and Thomas M. Guterbock (2005). *Beyond 50.05: A Report to the Nation on Livable Communities—Creating Environments for Successful Aging*. Washington, DC: AARP.

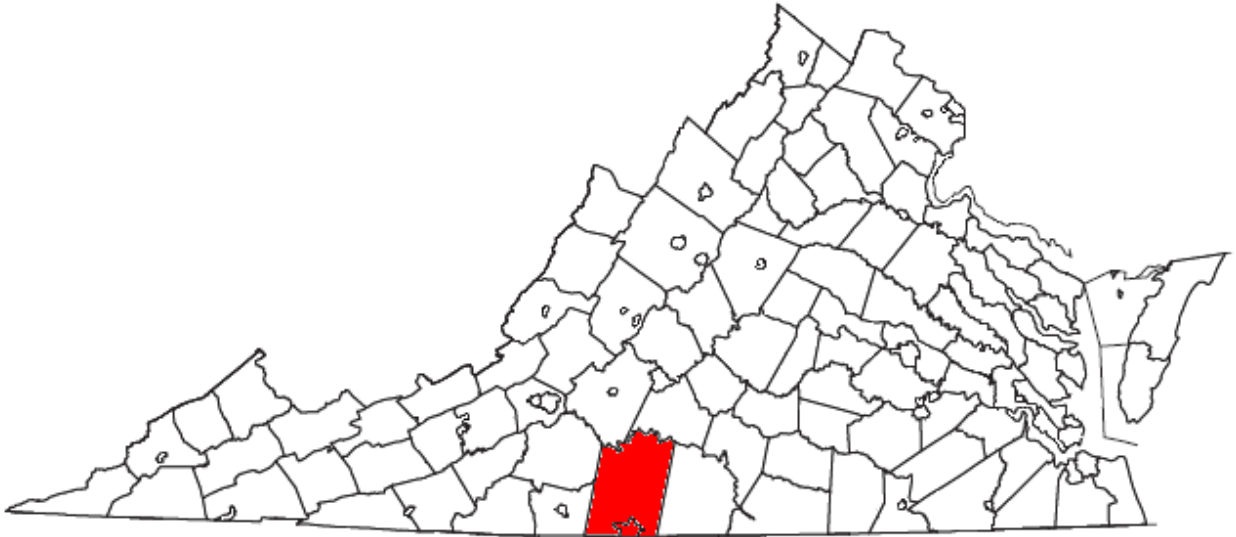
² Verba, Sidney; Schlozman, Kay Lehman; and Brady, Henry E. (1995). *Voice and Equality*. Massachusetts: Harvard College

³ Verba, Sidney and Norman H. Nie. (1972). *Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality*. New York: Harper and Row.

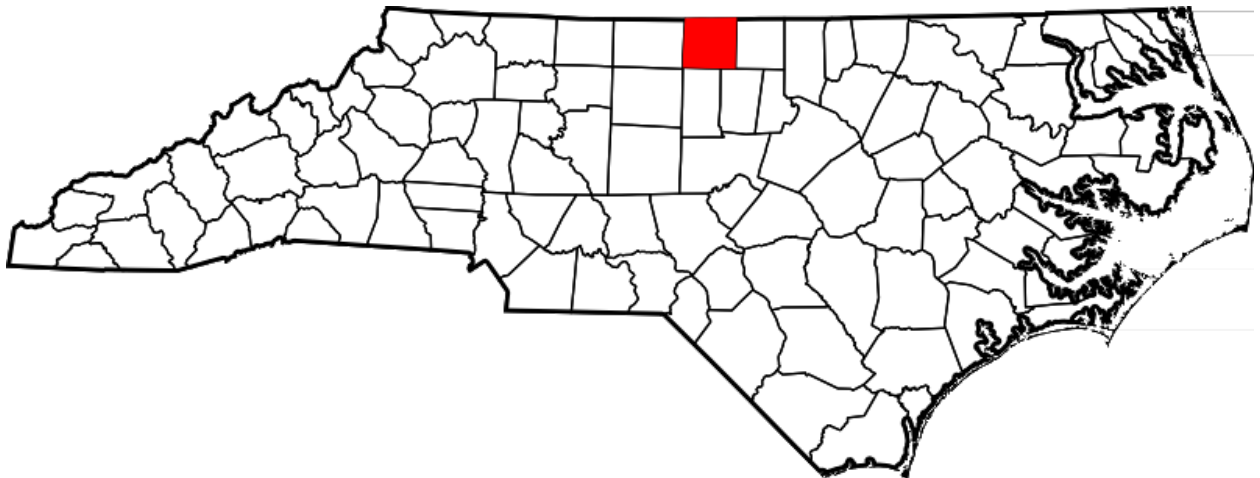
⁴ Guterbock, Thomas M. and John Fries (1997). *Maintaining America's Social Fabric: The AARP Survey of Civic Involvement*.

Figure I-1: Dan River Regional Area

Pittsylvania County and the City of Danville



Caswell County, North Carolina



Survey Design

The Danville survey questionnaire deals with a large number of specific topics related to these broader concerns. Respondents were asked about:

Overall Quality of Life in the Dan River Region

- Quality of life five years ago
- Expected quality five years from now
- Quality of life compared to other communities

Community Attachment

- Respondent's sense of community attachment
- Residents' perceived impact in making the community a better place to live
- Safety at home, in their neighborhood, in shopping areas, and in the schools

Civic Participation

- Attendance at religious services
- Organization membership
- Volunteering and giving
- Acquisition of civic skills

Political Participation

- Attendance at public meetings
- Voter registration and voter frequency
- Trust in government

People in the Economy

- Effect of economic downturn on the labor force
- Willingness to learn new skills and obtain training
- Current job situation, work rewards and commitment

Children and Schools

- Rating the Dan River Region as a place to raise children
- Evaluation of schools in the Dan River Region

- Biggest challenges facing children and youth in Danville

Health Issues

- Respondent's overall health
- Access to healthcare
- Perceptions of children's physical activities

Each section of this report provides a descriptive summary and interpretation of the results. Statistically significant differences among subgroups in the population are reported. The margin of error for the survey is ± 4.1 percentage points.

The complete 2011 interview script is found in Appendix A of this report. Appendix B details the survey and sampling methodology, Appendix C provides crosstabulations and satisfaction mean ratings by the demographic variables, and Appendix D includes the frequency distributions for all substantive questions. Appendix F presents the open-ended responses by respondents.

Subgroup Analysis

The responses were broken out and analyzed by several demographic categories. In discussing the results, we report those instances in which relevant *statistically significant* differences were found among demographic subgroups, for example, between women and men, or between residents of different parts of the Dan River Region. (Statistically significant differences are those that probably did not result merely from sampling variability, but instead reflect real differences within the population.⁵)

The demographic variables listed below were those principally used in our subgroup analysis. In some cases, categories were combined to facilitate comparison.

- Age. Age was divided into five categories for most analyses: 18-25, 26-37, 38-49, 50-64, and over 64.
- Education level. Comparisons were made between persons with some high school, high

⁵ Throughout this report, only those differences that reached statistical significance to the degree of $p < .05$ (a 95% level of confidence) will be discussed.

school graduates, some college, four-year degrees, some graduate work, and professional and doctorate degrees.

- Marital status. Respondents presently married were compared with those in other categories (separated, divorced, widowed, and never married).
- Household income. Four categories of self-reported annual household incomes were compared: Less than \$30,000; \$30,000 - \$49,999; \$50,000 - \$69,999; and more than \$70,000.
- Homeowner status. We also compared homeowners with renters.
- Gender. Women were compared with men.
- Race/ethnicity. Whites, Blacks, and “others” were compared. Hispanic respondents were also compared with non-Hispanic respondents. Two separate questions in the interview ask about race and ethnicity. Respondents are first asked if they consider themselves to be “of Hispanic origin.” They are then asked to say what category of race “best describes you,” using a list that does not include Hispanic as a race. This follows the definition in the U.S. Census, which considers Hispanic to be an ethnic category and makes clear that Hispanics can be of any race. However, many Hispanic respondents take a different view and when asked to state their “race” insist that they are Hispanic (or Latino). These respondents are classified in our survey as “other race” on the race question. As a result, the great majority of those labeled “other race” in the report are actually self-identified Hispanics.

In the graphs in this report that display race and ethnicity jointly, the “Hispanic” bar is based on the separate question about Hispanic origin, and this is displayed alongside the several categories from the race questions, thus including again many of the same Hispanic respondents categorized as “other” on race. But others who declared Hispanic origin are included with Whites, Blacks or Asians based on their responses to the “race” question.

Summary of Methods

This survey was conducted by telephone in order to ensure the broadest possible representation of the region. The survey used a triple-frame sample design, combining a landline-based Random Digit Dial (RDD) sample, a sample of directory-listed landline households, and an RDD sample of cellphone numbers from the region. Research suggests that telephone surveys based on landline sampling frames have shown a strong decline in the number of respondents from the youngest age group. Results also have shown that more minorities, low-income groups, renters, never-married residents, and respondents with low levels of education are reached via cell-phone samples than via traditional RDD samples, which contact only households that have landline phone service. Augmenting the RDD and listed samples with cell-phone respondents allows for a better representation of the population in the targeted region.

For half of the interviewed households, CSR employed a random-digit dialing [RDD] method that ensures that all households in the region with landline telephones were equally likely to be selected for interviews; for most others we utilized the “electronic white pages,” a purchased sample of directory-listed households in the region. Respondents in the RDD sample were asked a question about the listing status of their phone numbers, and reported that 12.3 percent of these calls were to unlisted numbers. The majority of these callers (82.3%) had chosen an unlisted number, as opposed to other unlisted households whose number had simply not yet appeared in the latest phone book. Finally, 15% of all respondents were contacted via cell-phone.⁶

We conducted all interviews from CSR's Computer-Aided Telephone Interviewing (CATI) laboratory in Charlottesville, Virginia. Production interviews were conducted from March 30 through May 2, 2011. The interviewing staff was composed of carefully trained personnel, most of

⁶ Although a larger number of cell phones would increase the power of the sample and require less weighting, it would also substantially increase study costs. Our “triple frame” design attempts to strike the right balance between survey costs and data quality.

whom had prior experience as CSR interviewers in similar studies. A total of 35,913 dialing attempts were made in the course of the survey, involving a sample of 7,928 different attempted phone numbers. All numbers were attempted at least once, but not all were working numbers and not all working numbers were those of residences located within the study area. At least eight attempts were made before a working number was inactivated, and a portion of the initial refusals were contacted again after no less than three days. CSR completed a total of 1,140 interviews for a final response rate estimated at 22.7 percent of the number of qualified households in the original sample. The interview took an average of 20.6 minutes to complete.⁷

Based on 1,140 respondents, the survey has a sampling error of plus or minus 3.7 percentage points. This estimate of the margin of error takes into account the “design effect” associated with post-stratification weighting of the data (See Appendix B). This means that in 95 out of 100 samples of this size drawn from Danville City, Pittsylvania County, and Caswell County, the percentage results obtained for each question in each sample would fall in a range of ± 4.1 percent of what would have been obtained if every household in the this area with a working telephone (landline and cell-phone) had been interviewed. Larger sampling errors are present when analyzing subgroups of the sample and for questions asked of fewer respondents.

The collected survey responses were weighted before analysis to reflect the estimated distribution of phone service types in the region (that is, the percentages of landline-only households, cell-phone-only households, and those with both types of phone service), and the percentage of unlisted telephones among all those reached via landline was adjusted by weighting to match the percent unlisted in the RDD sample. The weighting also adjusted for respondent gender, homeownership, and percent of African-Americans, as reflected in the 2009 American Community Survey data for the region available from the U.S. Census Bureau.

⁷ Response Rate 3 given above includes only completions. Response Rate 4 also includes partials and was 23.1% for this survey. The “completion time” indicates the time that it took the interviewer to complete the interview after selection of a qualified respondent. (See Table E6 of Appendix E.)

Details on this ‘post-stratification’ weighting are provided in Appendix B.

When comparing the results, T-tests were used to assess the difference in responses between demographic groups. Further details on the sample and methodology may be found in Appendix B of this report.

All the T-tests performed this year were completed using SPSS Complex Samples, an add-on module for SPSS for Windows®, which is used by CSR for data analysis purposes. This module provides more statistical precision with respect to inferences for a population by incorporating the sample design into survey analysis. It also makes it possible to take into account the design effect, a by-product of post stratification weighting, when conducting the statistical tests. Consequently, some differences in mean ratings could be found statistically insignificant that would not be so identified without the module.

Throughout the report, percentages may not total exactly to 100% due to rounding.

Demographic Profile

Respondents are asked some questions about themselves and their households to allow for analysis of the data by personal and social characteristics.

These data were weighted by gender and homeownership to more closely represent the population of the Dan River Region. The weighting of the data also took into account our estimates of the percentages of the County’s adult telephone population that are served by cell-phone only, landline only, and by both types of phones. For more about the weighting procedure, see the Methodology Report in Appendix B.

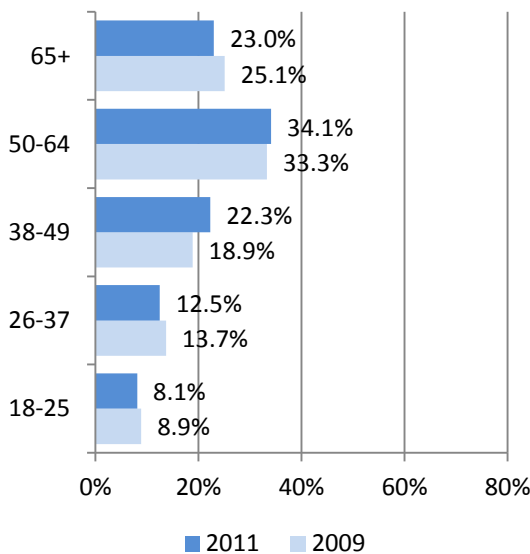
Overall, 13.8 percent of the completed surveys consisted of cell-phone respondents and 86.2 percent consisted of land-line respondents. After weighting, 37.5 percent of the respondents were reached via cell-phone, and 22.8 percent were adults who have cell-phone service only. In general, this strategy of augmenting the traditional RDD samples with cell-phone samples improves the overall distribution of the completed surveys across several demographic variables.

In the Danville Metropolitan Statistical Area, women slightly outnumber men (52.4% to

47.6%).⁸ Once the Danville data were weighted by gender and the other weighting factors, women accounted for 53.1 percent of respondents.

With regard to age, about one-fourth (23.0%) of the sample were over 64; one-third (34.1%) were between 50 and 64; 22.3% were 38-49; 12.5% were 26-37; and 8.1% were 18-25. These data are presented in Figure I-2. Notice this and subsequent figures in this chapter present the demographic characteristics of respondents from the 2011 survey in comparison with those of respondents from the 2009 survey. In the case almost all of these demographic variables, the demographic profile of respondents showed very little change over this period.

Figure I-2: Age of Respondents



Almost half of the respondents to the 2011 survey were married (47.6%), 22.1 percent were divorced or separated, 11.0 percent were widowed, and 19.3 percent were never married.

One-third (33.0%) of respondents had children under the age of 18 living in their home. Of those, 44.3 percent had children under the age of six, 68.8 percent had children between the ages of six and twelve, and 99.5 percent had teens from age thirteen to seventeen.

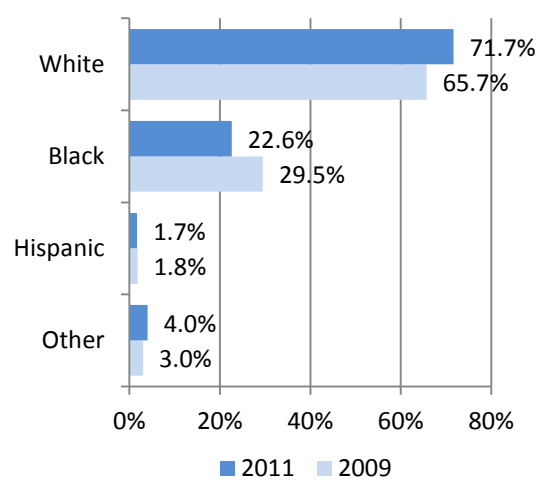
Most of the households with children send their children to public schools (89.2%). Two out of ten (19.3%) send their children to private schools. Only 2.1 percent currently home-school their

⁸ American Community Survey, 2009 Census Bureau.

children. Some of the respondents had multiple children attending more than one of the presented options.

Respondents were asked (in separate questions) what race they considered themselves to be, and whether they considered themselves to be Hispanic. Over two-thirds of the 2011 sample (71.7%) identified themselves as white, 22.6 percent black, 5.7 percent said they were something else (i.e., Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander, etc.) or gave their race as “Hispanic” or “Latino.” Not included in this breakdown are the 2.1 percent of our sample who refused to answer the question about race. See Figure I-2.

Figure I-3: Race of Respondents



As of 2011, only 51.4 percent of respondents indicated they are working full or part-time; 40.6 percent were working full-time and an additional 10.8 percent were working part-time. A significant number of respondents were retired (22.6%). Those not employed comprised 9.6 percent permanently disabled, 3.0 percent temporarily laid off or disabled, 5.8 percent currently unemployed, 2.4 percent homemakers, 4.5 percent students, and less than 1 percent who gave “other” as their response.⁹

⁹ Because the unemployed are difficult to reach via surveys, and because respondents may be hesitant to disclose unemployment, the 5.8 percent reported unemployment rate may (or may not) include systematic, as well as, random error.

Figure I-4: Employment

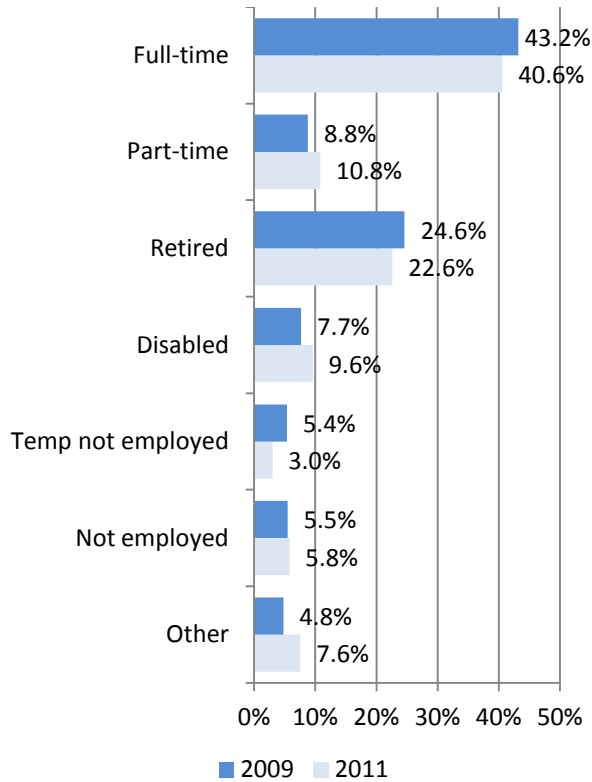
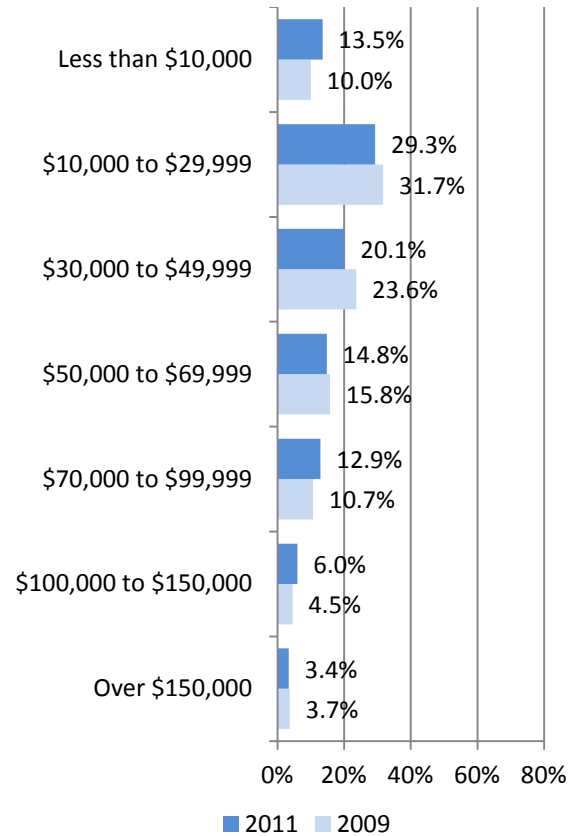


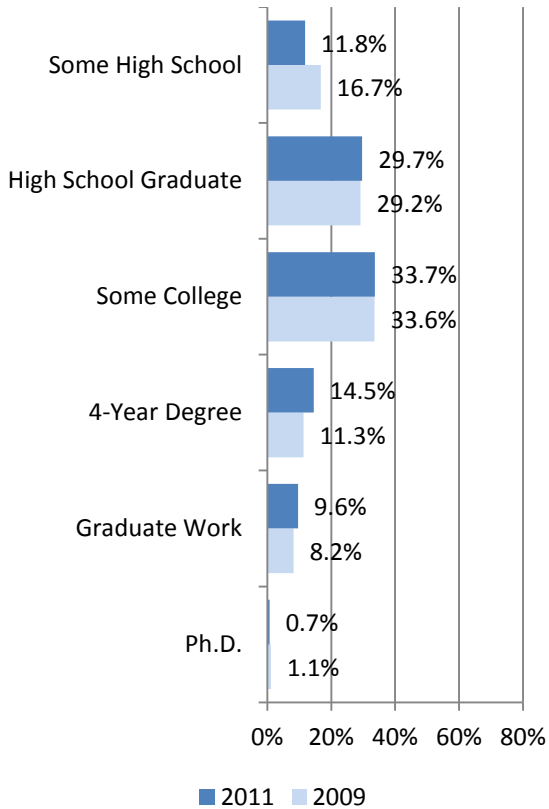
Figure I-5: Household Income



The median annual household income for our 2011 sample was between \$30,000 and \$50,000. Over forty percent (42.8%) of the sample reported household incomes under \$30,000, 20.1 percent fell into the \$30,000 to \$49,999 range, 14.8 percent fell into the \$50,000 to \$69,999 range, 12.9 percent fell in the \$70,000 to \$99,999 range, and 9.4 percent reported incomes over \$100,000.

With respect to education, respondents were asked to report their highest level of academic achievement. As is illustrated in Figure I-6, 11.8 percent of 2011 respondents did not finish high school and 29.7 percent were high school graduates. Slightly more than one-third (33.7%) had attended some college or completed a two year degree. Only 14.5 percent had a four year degree. About one in ten (9.6%) had done some graduate work and 0.7% earned a Ph.D. or professional degree.

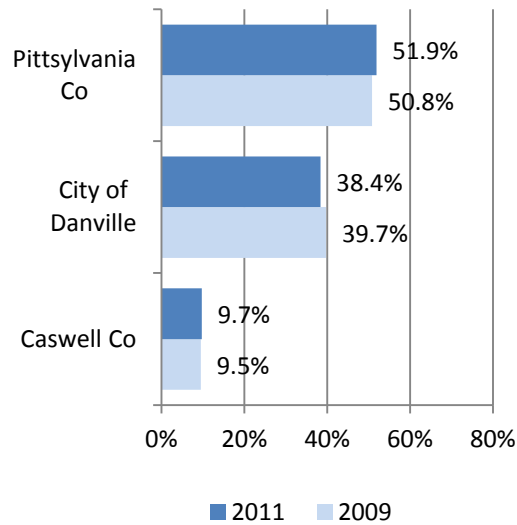
Figure I-6: Educational Level



Under one percent (0.9%) of the 2011 respondents have lived in the Dan River Region less than one year, 4.0 percent have lived in the area 1 to 5 years, 20.3 percent have lived in the County 6 to 19 years, and 74.8 percent reported living in the County twenty years or more.

Over half (51.9%) of the 2011 respondents were residents of Pittsylvania County. Nearly forty (38.4%) percent were residents of Danville City, and 9.7% of the respondents were residents of Caswell County, North Carolina.

Figure I-7: Geographic Distribution



Nearly one-third (29.0%) of the 2011 respondents described the type of community in which they live as being an urban area or a small city. Over one-third (36.4%) of the respondents described the area in which they live as being “out in the country.” The remaining respondents described their community as “suburban” (11.1%), a “small town” (13.8%), or a “rural village” (9.7%).

Over half (56.8%) of the 2011 respondents who live in Danville City described it as being an urban area or small city. Of those who live in Pittsylvania County, 52.7 percent described the area in which they live as being “out in the country” or a “rural village.” Those who live in Caswell County, NC, were also most likely (61.3%) to describe the area in which they live as being “out in the country.”

Most respondents to the 2011 survey live in a home that they own (69.8%), whereas 27.8 percent rent and 2.4 percent have some other arrangement, such as living with their parents. Most respondents live in single-family homes (76.8%), 3.9 percent live in duplexes or townhouses, and 7.5 percent live in apartments or condominiums. About 11.7 percent of respondents live in some other type of structure, such as a mobile home or trailer.

II. Quality of Life in the Dan River Region

Overall Impression

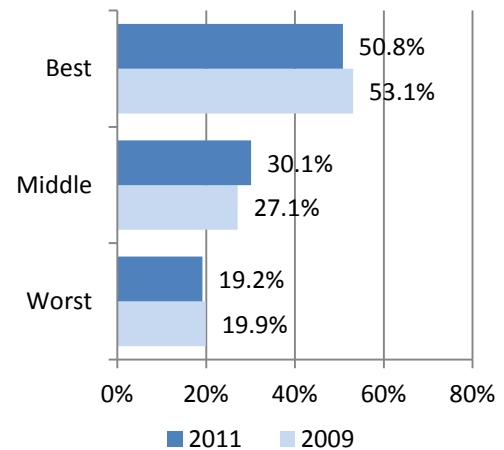
As in the 2009 survey, respondents were asked about their overall impressions of the quality of life in the Dan River Region.

“Please imagine a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 represents the worst possible community in which to live, and 10 represents the best possible community. Where on that scale would you rate Danville as a place to live?”

As of 2011, residents gave the Dan River Region a mean rating of 7.31. This rating is statistically indistinguishable from the 2009 rating of 7.30, but suggests that residents continue to have a high regard for the quality of life in the region. Appendix E of this report shows the results of statistical tests for changes in all substantive items on the survey between years. (See Appendix E)

Figure II-1 illustrates the distribution of ratings provided by respondents for both 2011 and 2009. The ratings were divided into three categories: “Best” includes ratings from 10 through 8, “Middle” is 7 and 6, and “Worst” is 5 through 1. More than one-half (50.8%) of this year’s respondents gave “best” ratings of the overall quality of life in the Dan River Region, whereas 30.1 percent were in the middle, and 19.2 percent gave the “worst” ratings.¹⁰

Figure II-1: Overall Quality of Life Ratings



Quality of Life over Time

Residents who have lived in the Dan River Region for over five years were also asked to rate where Danville stood five years ago on a 1 to 10 scale. On this scale too, 1 represents the worst possible community to live in and 10 the best.

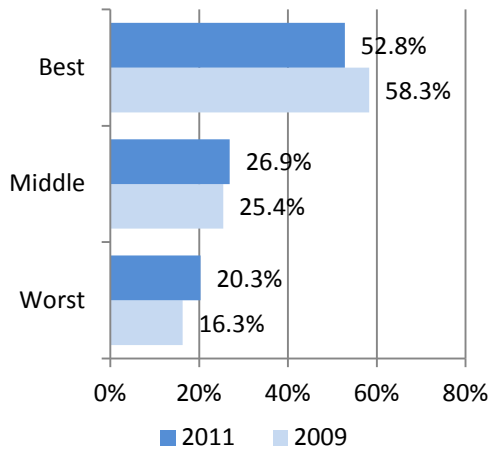
As of 2011, the mean “retrospective” rating for Danville’s quality of life five years ago is 7.29. This mean 2011 retrospective rating is lower than the mean 2009 retrospective rating of 7.55, and this change is statistically significant. Yet interpretation of this decline is difficult. It may be that respondents have less positive feelings about 2006 (the year five years prior to 2011) than they do about 2004 (the year five years prior to 2009). But it may instead simply be that respondents in 2011 are less nostalgic than were respondents in 2009.

Indeed, a finding that assessments of the present have held steady while assessments of the past have declined is arguably a cause for optimism. Whereas the past was rated a full 0.25 points higher than the present as of 2009, by 2011 this “gap” had reversed, such that respondents rated the present 0.02 points *higher* than the past.

Figure II-2 graphically illustrates results for the “overall quality of life five years ago” item with the same classification system as in Figure II-1, where “Best” was defined as those ratings from 8-10, “Middle” was 6-7, and “Worst” was 1-5.

¹⁰ Directly comparable national questions on quality of life are difficult to find, but an October 2010 Pew Research Center survey suggests that about 51 percent of Americans are “very satisfied” and 35 percent of Americans are “somewhat satisfied” with the overall quality of life in their communities. Survey based on 2691 telephone interviews. Data retrieved from the Roper Center IPOLL survey database [USPSRA.1118105.RO4D].

Figure II-2: Overall Quality of Life Five Years Ago

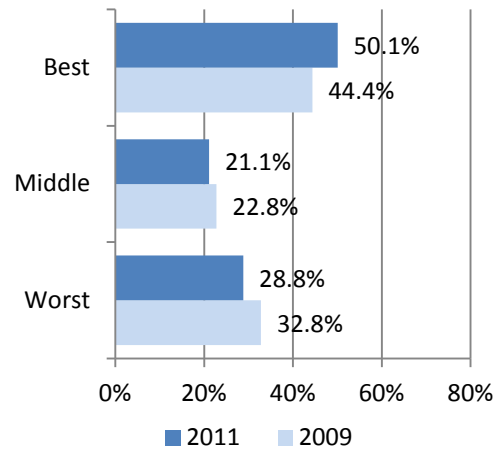


Respondents were next asked where they think the area that they live will stand five years from now. Responses were once again measured on a 1 to 10 scale, with 1 representing the worst possible community to live in and 10 the best. The 2011 mean rating for this item was 6.96, which is slightly higher than the 2009 mean rating of 6.69. (This improvement in assessments of the future falls just short of statistical significance.)

Here again, the findings seem open to interpretation, but somewhat more positive than those from 2009. On the one hand, respondents in 2011 continue to be less optimistic about the future (mean rating 6.96) than either the present (mean rating 7.31) or the past (mean rating 7.29). But the “gap” between past and future ratings has shrunk considerably in just two years (falling from 0.86 in 2009 to 0.33 in 2011.)

Figure II-3 graphically illustrates the results for this “overall quality of life five years from now” item with the same classification system as in Figure II-2, where “Best” was defined as those ratings from 8-10, “Middle” was 6-7, and “Worst” was 1-5.

Figure II-3: Overall Quality of Life Five Years from Now

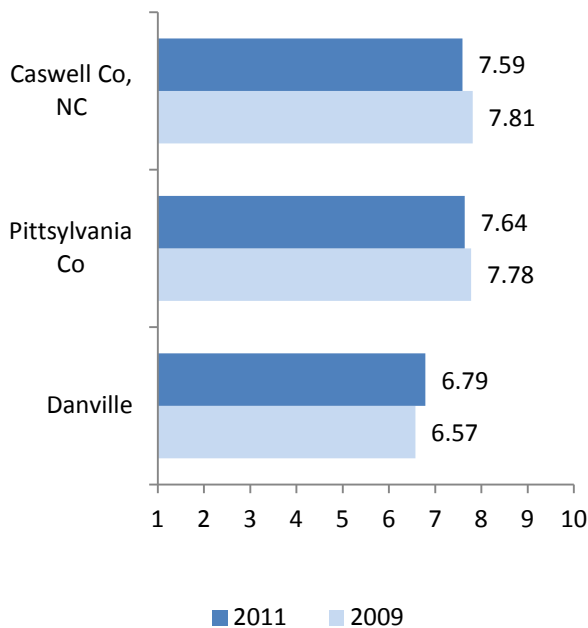


Finally, residents were asked to rate the Dan River Region as a place to live compared to other counties or cities. (About one-fifth of the residents of the Dan River Region indicated that they have always lived in this area and thus could not make this comparison.) Of those who did make the comparison, just under three-fourths (72.1%) rated the Danville area as “excellent,” “very good,” or “good,” compared to other areas where they have lived. Just over one-fourth (27.8%) rated the area as “only fair” or “poor” compared to others areas where they have lived.

While not statistically distinct from the 2009 results for this item, this comparative indicator of quality of life appears to have worsened somewhat since 2009. In particular, the percentage of respondents who perceived the Danville community as “only fair” or “poor” relative to other communities grew from 21.9 percent in 2009 to the aforementioned 27.8 percent figure in 2011.

Figure II-4 sheds light on another aspect of these quality of life ratings that may be of interest. On the one hand, respondents to the 2011 survey from Caswell County and Pittsylvania County continued to rate the quality of life in their communities higher than did respondents who live in Danville City (mean ratings of 7.59 and 7.64 respectively compared to 6.79 – see also Table C64 of Appendix C). On the other hand, this geographical gap also narrowed considerably between 2009 and 2011 (with mean ratings in Danville slightly up and mean ratings in Caswell and Pittsylvania slightly down).

Figure II-4: Mean Overall Quality of Life Ratings by Area



oldest and the youngest respondents was not statistically significant. (See Appendix C.)

Marital status was positively related to assessments of quality of life in the region. Generally speaking, married and widowed respondents gave higher ratings than those who have never married. (See Appendix C.)

Consistent with the county and city differences mentioned above, residents who said they live out in the country or in suburban areas gave higher quality of life ratings than those who live in the city or in small towns. (See Appendix C.)

Finally, various indicators highly correlated with age were positively related to assessments of quality of life. Specifically, households without children under 18, respondents who have lived in the Dan River Region for over 20 years, and retired respondents were all systematically positive in their assessments of quality of life in the region. (See Appendix C.)

Demographic Summary

As of 2011, female respondents to the survey were more likely than men to give positive assessments of both the current and future quality of life in the Dan River Region. (See Appendix C)

Residents with lower levels of education were more likely to assess all three indicators of quality of life in the region more favorably than those with higher levels of education. However, some research suggests that less-educated respondents are more likely to give positive responses to survey questions *in general* than are more educated respondents.¹¹ (See Appendix C)

Age was also generally positively related to quality of life ratings. Older respondents were generally more favorable in their quality of life ratings than younger respondents. Respondents over 64 in particular gave higher ratings to past, present and future quality of life in the region than all other age groups, though the gap between the

¹¹ Meisenberg, G., & Williams, A. (2008). Are acquiescent and extreme response styles related to low intelligence and education? *Personality and Individual Differences*, 44, 1539-1550.

III. Community Attachment

Community Attachment

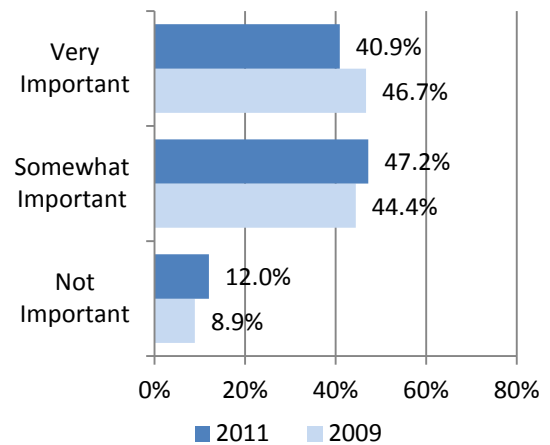
One of the main objectives of this survey is to measure people's attachment to their community. Community attachment is a strong predictor of social capital and an important measure because it is not as closely tied to socioeconomic status as other predictors. Respondents were asked several questions about their place in the community in which they live. This chapter reports the general level of community attachment residents indicated in their responses to these questions.

The first community attachment question inquires:

“How important is it to you to feel a part of the community?”

Figure III-1 illustrates the response to this question. As of 2011, about two-fifths (40.9%) of the residents said it is “very important” to feel a part of the community. Another 47.2 percent said it is “somewhat important.” Only 12 percent of the residents said it is “not at all important” to feel a part of the community.¹²

Figure III-1: Important to Feel a Part of the Community



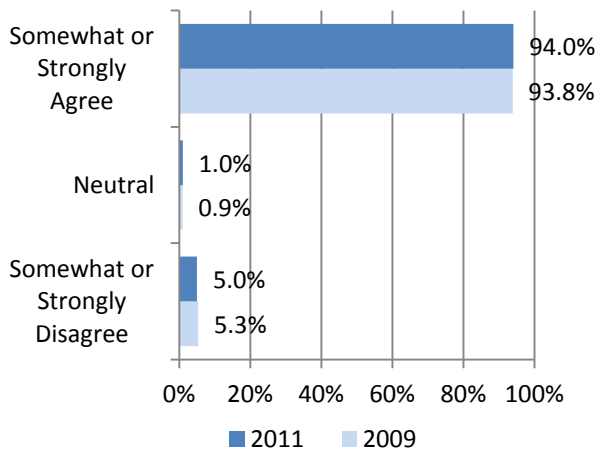
As indicated in Figure III-1, the perceived importance of community attachment has declined somewhat since 2009: more respondents report that it is “not important” or only “somewhat important” to feel part of the community, and fewer respondents report that it is “very important.” As indicated in Appendix E, moreover, this decline is statistically significant. (See Table E-2, Appendix E.) Notably, the percentage strongly agreeing declined from 46.3 percent to 40.7 percent in 2011.

Respondents were also asked how consistently they feel a sense of belonging or membership in the community. More than one-half (59%) of residents said they “always” or “most of the time” feel a sense of belonging to the community in which they live. One-fourth of residents (27.5%) said they “sometimes” feel a sense of belonging while 13.5% “rarely” or “never” feel they belong to the community. There was no statistically significant change in responses to this question in comparison to 2009. (See Table E-2, Appendix E.)

Residents were next asked to indicate to what extent they agree or disagree with three statements about the community or area where they live: 1) “I feel at home in the area where I live;” 2) “I feel I have a lot in common with the people who live in this community;” and 3) “It is very important to me to live in this particular area.”

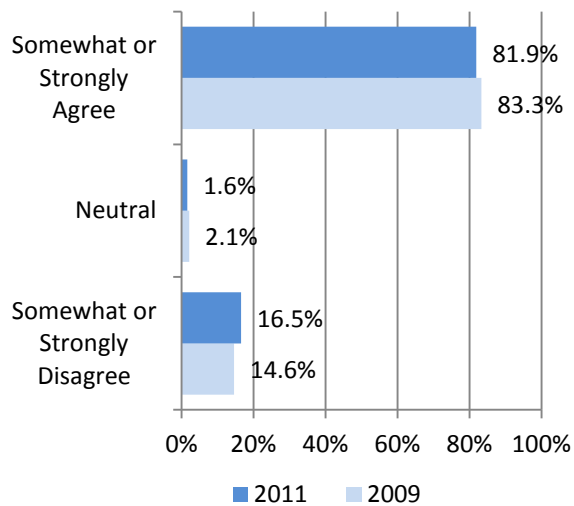
¹² Few nationally archived surveys contain questions on local community attachment, but a January 2011 Pew Survey did ask respondents about whether they knew the names of their neighbors. The survey found that about 28 percent of respondents knew “all” of them, 48 percent knew “some” of them, and 23 percent knew “none” of them. Results based on 2,251 telephone interviews conducted for the Pew Internet and American Life Project by Princeton Survey Research Associates and archived in the Roper Center IPOLL survey database.

Figure III-2: Feel at Home Where I Live



As indicated in Figure III-2, more than ninety percent (94.0%) of respondents to the 2011 survey “strongly agreed” or “somewhat agreed” that they feel at home where they live, and only 5 percent “strongly disagreed” or “somewhat disagreed.” These results are not significantly different from those for the 2009 survey. (See Table E-2, Appendix E.)

Figure III-3: Have a Lot in Common with People Who Live in this Community

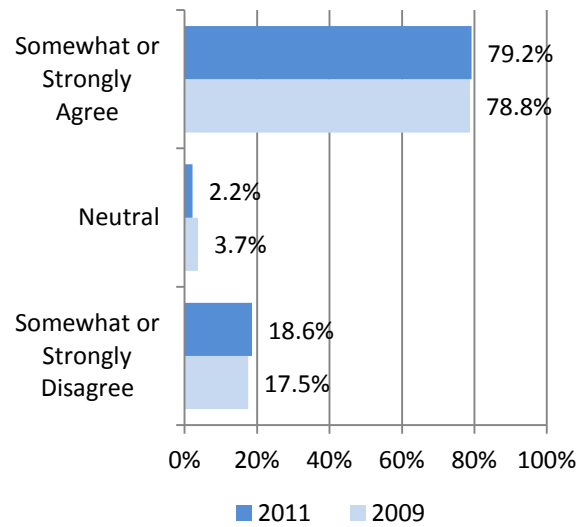


As indicated in Figure III-3, more than eighty percent (81.9%) of respondents to the 2011 survey said that they “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” that they have a lot in common with people who live in their community. About 1 in 6 (16.5 percent) of respondents to the 2011 survey said that they “strongly disagree” or “somewhat

disagree.” (These results are not significantly different from those in 2009.)

Further, as indicated in Figure III-4, almost 80 percent (79.2%) of respondents to the 2011 said that they “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” that it is very important to live in the Dan River Region, and only 18.6 percent said that they “somewhat disagree” or “strongly disagree.” Although the mean on this item did not change significantly, the percentage strongly agreeing with the statement went down significantly from 49.6 percent to 44.3 percent.¹³

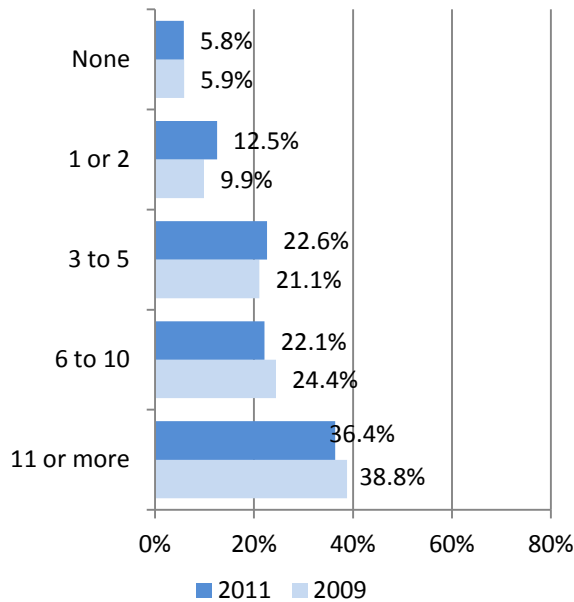
Figure III-4: Feel it is Important to Live in this Particular Area



Having a stronger sense of belonging to one’s community is strongly associated with having established relationships with others who live in the community. As indicated in Figure III-5, more than one-half (58.5%) of the respondents to the 2011 survey said they have six or more neighbors they know on a first-name basis. Just over one-third (35.1%) of the residents said they have one to five neighbors they know on a first-name basis. Only 5.8 percent said they do not have any neighbors they know on a first-name basis. These 2011 findings do not show statistically significant changes from the 2009 survey. (See Table E-2, Appendix E.)

¹³ As shown by a Chi-square test.

Figure III-5: Neighbors You Know



Having relatives who live close by also helps people feel a sense of belonging in their community. As of 2011, about four in five (80.1%) of residents in the Dan River Region said they have close relatives within a fifteen minute drive of where they live, and 41.7 percent said they have close relatives within walking distance of where they live. Neither of these 2011 figures represent statistically significant changes since 2009. (See Table E-2, Appendix E.)

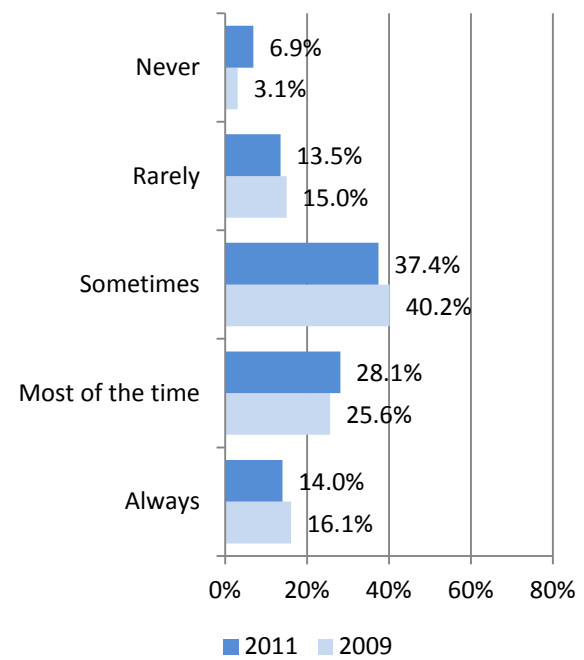
A very simple and direct indicator of community attachment can be captured by asking people if they would like to continue living in their community in the near future. As of 2011, more than two-thirds (72.1%) of the residents of the Dan River Region said they would still like to be living there five years from now. In response to a separate question, 75.2 percent said they *expect* to be living in the Dan River Region five years from now. (Once again, neither 2011 figure represents a statistically significant change from the 2009 survey: see Table E-2, Appendix E.)

Efficacy and Perceptions of Community

Residents were also asked to rate their perceptions of the appearance of their community and what impact they have in making their community a better place to live. As of 2011, more than forty percent (42.1%) feel that they “always” or “most of the time” have an impact in making their community a better place to live. Another 37.4

percent said they “sometimes” have an impact in making their community a better place to live. Just over one in five (20.4%) said they “rarely” or “never” have this type of impact.

Figure III-6: Impact in Making the Community a Better Place to Live



As seen in Figure III-6, the differences between this response in 2011 versus the 2009 survey are small, and do not point to a clear trend. As such, the change between the two surveys is not statistically significant. (See Table E-2, Appendix E.)

In addition to asking residents whether they have an impact on making their community a better place to live, residents were also asked to what degree they agree or disagree with the statements, “I care about what others in my community think of my actions” and “My neighborhood is being well kept up.”

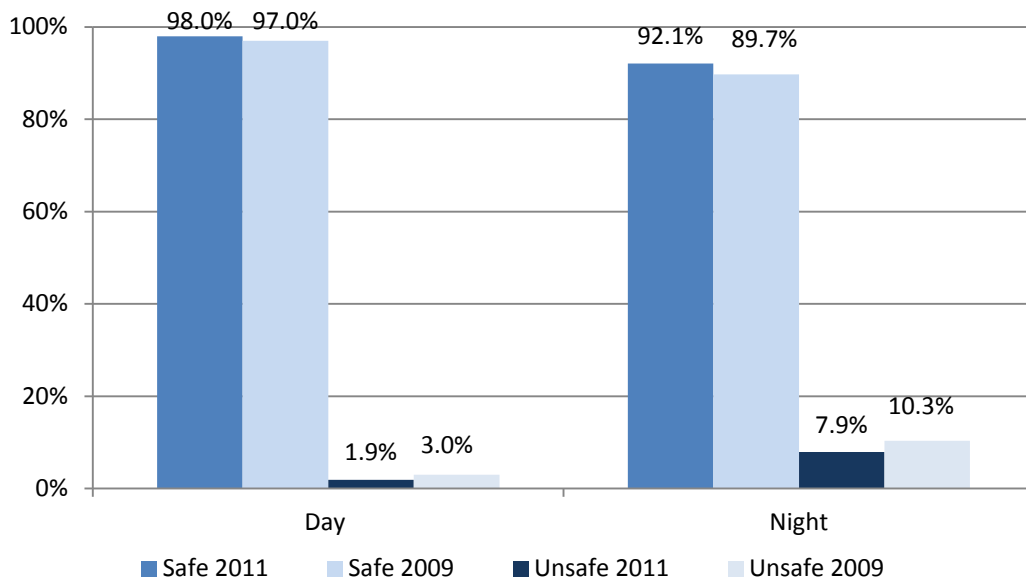
As of 2011, more than eighty percent (82.9%) reported that they “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” that they care what others think of their actions, and 89.1 percent reported that they “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” that their neighborhood is being well kept up. For neither of these two questions is the difference between mean responses from the 2011 survey and the 2009 survey statistically significant. (See Table E-2, Appendix E.)

Crime and Personal Safety in the Community

Feeling safe in one’s community is another factor in helping maintain a sense of belonging to the community. Respondents were asked to describe how safe they felt in their home, in their neighborhood during the day and during the night, in shopping areas during the day and during the night, and in the schools in their community.

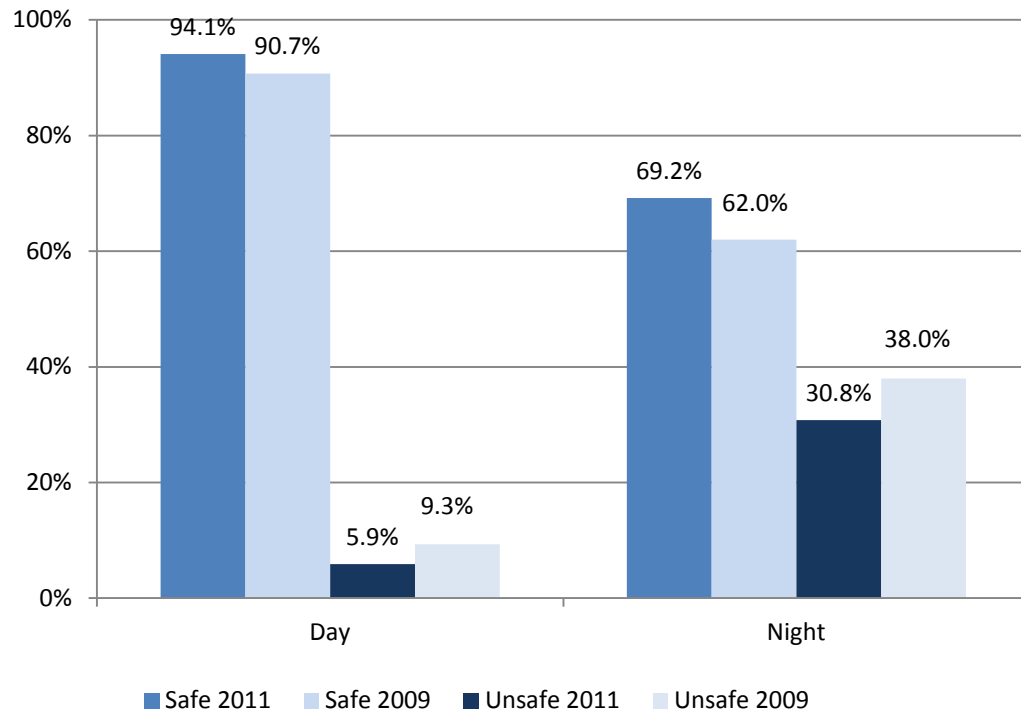
Overall, respondents to the 2011 survey indicated that they feel safe in their neighborhoods. Less than 2 percent (1.9%) indicated they felt “unsafe” during the day and 7.9 percent felt “unsafe” at night.

Figure III-7: Safety in the Neighborhood



As seen in Figure III-7, respondents to the 2011 survey felt slightly safer in both the day and the night when compared to respondents to the 2009 survey. In part due to the very small proportion of respondents who felt unsafe in the day during either year, the reduction from 3.0 percent of respondents who felt unsafe in 2009 to 1.9 percent of respondents who felt unsafe in 2011 safety represents a statistically significant change. (See Table E-2, Appendix E.)

When asked specifically about their perceptions of safety in shopping areas, just under one in three respondents to the 2011 survey (30.8%) said they feel “unsafe” in shopping areas at night (compared to 5.9% during the day).

Figure III-8: Safety in Shopping Areas

As shown in Figure III-8 above, both of these 2011 figures represent a statistically significant improvement over 2009. (See Table E-2, Appendix E.)

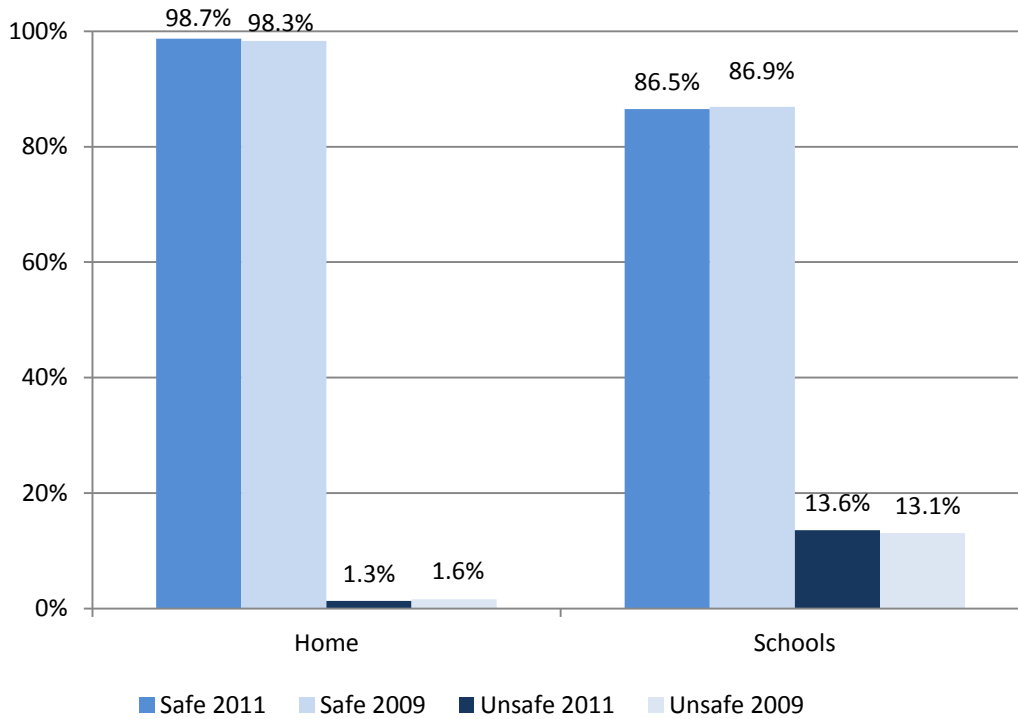
When asked about safety in their homes, respondents to the 2011 survey indicated that they feel quite safe. Only 1.3 percent said they feel “unsafe” at home

When asked about safety in the schools, 13.6 percent of 2011 respondents said that they think

schools are “unsafe” for students. The school safety question was asked of all residents, regardless of whether or not they have children in the schools.

As seen in Figure III-9 , these responses represent minimal changes from the 2009 survey that are not statistically significant. (See Table E-2, Appendix E.)

Figure III-9: Safety at Home and in Schools



The Community Attachment Index

Research suggests that how well a resident is attached to their community has a significant impact on their perceptions of the quality of life within the community. As in 2009, an index was created to measure levels of community attachment¹⁴ and the index scores were used to assess the impact that community attachment has on the ratings of quality of life given by residents in the Dan River Region. Community attachment can be thought of as a set of positive sentiments or orientations toward one’s area of residence, and also as a set of social relationships that attach a person to a local network of neighbors and/or kin.

Our index incorporates both these dimensions of the community attachment concept.

The community attachment index consists of the following items:

- DRIVEREL – Do you have any close relatives who live within 15 minutes drive of your home?
- CLOSEREL – Do you have any close relatives who live within walking distance of your home?
- FEELPART – How important is it to you to feel a part of the community?
- BELONG – How often do you feel a sense of belonging or membership in your community?
- ATHOME – How much do you agree with the statement, “I feel at home in the area where I live?”
- COMMON – How much do you agree with the statement, “I feel I have a lot in common with the people who live in this community?”
- ACTIONS – How much do you agree with the statements, “I care about what others in my community think of my actions?”

¹⁴ For more on the concept of community attachment and its measurement, see Chavis, David M. and Wandersman, Abraham. (1990). “Sense of Community in the Urban Environment: A Catalyst for Participation and Community Development.” *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 18:1.

- **IMPLIVE** – How much do you agree with the statement, “It is very important to me to live in this particular area?”

As in 2009, a factor analysis confirmed that answers to the questions above can be reasonably combined to construct an overall index of community attachment.¹⁵ The index utilized a simple point system. Respondents were given one point if they have relatives who live within fifteen minutes driving distance; one point if they have relatives within walking distance; one point if they always feel a part of the community; one point if they always feel a sense of belonging; one point if they strongly agree that they feel at home in the area where they live; one point if they strongly agree that they feel they have a lot in common with people; one point if they strongly agree that they care what others think of their actions; and one point if it is very important for them to live in this particular area. The scale varies from a minimum of zero to a maximum of eight points with about half (53.1%) of the sample scoring four points or higher on the scale.

The community attachment index declined significantly from a mean of 4.16 in 2009 to a mean of 3.79 in 2011. Because the index is constructed exclusively from responses of those who strongly agree with a particular question, this decline occurred despite the fact that only one out of eight index elements, “important to feel a part of the community,” showed a statistically significant decline in mean ratings.

One possible explanation of the decline in the “important to feel a part of the community” item is that long-time residents are significantly more likely than are newer residents to value feeling a part of their local community (even if they are not more attached to the community in other ways). As it turns out, the percentage of long-time residents among respondents to the survey dropped from 33.5 percent in 2009 to 29.6 percent in 2011.

Five of the other seven items utilized for the community attachment index also showed slight declines, but none of these declines was

statistically significant. (The other two items showed slight and non-statistically significant increases.)

As in 2009, we again utilized this index to explore the relationship between community attachment and our four primary quality of life indicators (current, past, future and comparative). Once again, we found a highly statistically significant and positive relationship between all four of these quality of life indicators and community attachment.

Demographic Differences in Community Attachment Indicators

Once again as in 2009, we conducted statistical tests to determine demographic differences in specific indicators of community attachment. As of the 2011 survey, women were significantly more likely to feel at home where they live, to care what others think of their actions, and think that it is important to feel a part of the community.

Residents of Pittsylvania County and Caswell County were more likely than Danville residents to say they would like to be living here five years from now. This is in part attributable to the differing racial composition of the three areas, since African-Americans were generally less likely to say they would like to stay in the area. However, in Pittsylvania County, blacks were almost as likely as whites to say they wanted to remain.

Residents of Pittsylvania County and Caswell County were also more likely to feel safe in their neighborhoods at night. Those in Pittsylvania County were also more likely to feel safe in shopping areas at night than those in Danville.

Race was a significant factor in the level of community attachment. White residents know their neighbors and both would like and expect to be living in the Dan River Region in five years. Black residents said they have close relatives and have been affected more by the economic downturn. Black residents also reported feeling more of an impact in making the community a better place to live, and caring what others thought of their actions. Black residents were also more likely to report feeling safe in shopping areas at night at home.

Income was positively related to residents feeling a sense of belonging in the community. However,

¹⁵ As in 2009, all eight items were positively associated. Predictably, however, the two purely descriptive items CLOSEREL and DRIVEREL are somewhat distinct from the other six evaluative items.

those with less education and income have close relatives within walking distance who could provide support when needed. They were also affected more by the economic downturn. Education and income are also positively related to the safety people feel in their neighborhood and shopping areas.

Age and marital status are positively related to community attachment.¹⁶ Those over the age of 38 are more likely to know their neighbors. Older residents and married residents would also like to be living in the Dan River Region five years from now and expect to do so, with those over 64 being the most likely to respond positively to both these questions. Older residents are more likely to say they have an impact in making their community a better place to live, feel a sense of belonging in their community and feel it is important to live in this particular area. Younger residents under the age of 37 said they feel safe in their neighborhoods and shopping areas during the day.

Those without children under 18 were more likely to both like and expect to be living in the Danville area five years from now. Despite these positive assessments of the region, those without children under 18 were more likely to report having been affected by the economic downturn.

Homeowners knew more neighbors, and both would like and expect to be living in the Danville area five years from now compared to renters. Homeowners also reported a higher sense of belonging in the community, feeling at home in the area they live, feeling they have a lot in common with their neighbors, and that it is important to live in their particular area.

Residents who have lived in the community for 20 or more years were more likely to know their neighbors and have relatives who live nearby, as well as like and expect to be living where they are 5 years from now. Length of residence was positively related to feelings of commonality with people in the community and feeling a sense of belonging in the community. Long-time residents

were more likely to feel at home in the area in which they live and that it is important to live in this particular area. However, those new to the area (especially those in the area less than 2 years) were more likely to feel safe in their neighborhood and at home.

Those who live in a single house were more likely to like and expect to be living where they were 5 years from now compared to those living in an apartment or condo. But 100% of those living in an apartment or condo felt safe in their neighborhood during the day and feel safe at home, and they were also more likely to feel safe in shopping areas during the day.

Residents who live out in the country are more likely to have relatives within walking distance and want and expect to be living there five years from now. Yet those living in suburban areas were more likely to feel a sense of belonging in the community, as well as feel that they have a lot in common with their community and care what others think of their actions. They also, along with rural residents, felt safer in their neighborhoods and shopping areas, particularly at night. Suburban and rural residents also felt their schools were safer than did residents of other communities. Retirees were also more attached to their communities, feel a sense of belonging in the community, and think it is important to live in this particular area.

See Appendix C for a more complete statistical elaboration of demographic differences on these items.

¹⁶ “Young Professionals” (those between 18 and 37 and holding at least a BA/BS degree were somewhat lower on the community attachment index (mean = 3.25) than were other respondents (mean = 3.69). Moreover, only about 49 percent of young professionals (as opposed to 78 percent of other respondents) expected to be living in the Danville Region five years from now.

IV. Civic Participation

Introduction

Social capital can be both a “public good” and a “private good.”¹⁷ Individuals participate in civic and community organizations for a combination of reasons. Volunteering and participating in community organizations are ways for people to develop connections with other people of “like minds,” to engage in social activities with others, and to form networks that link individuals in a community. This is the “private good” aspect of participating in civic organizations. At the same time, by volunteering in civic organizations, people engage in activities that benefit the community. For example, by belonging to the Lions Club, members are involved in fund-raising activities to help support a cause such as fighting a disease. This is the “public good” of organizational involvement. Examining the extent to which people engage in volunteer organizations can help to measure social capital within the community and the potential for both individual and collective benefits from these civic engagements.

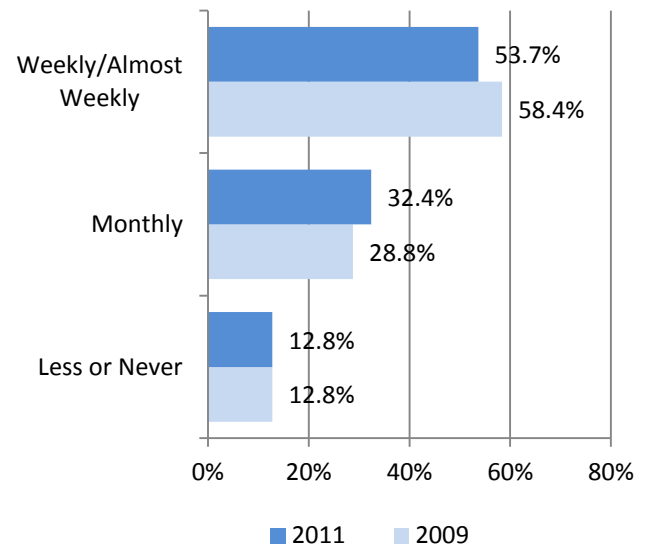
Religious Activities

Respondents were asked:

“Not including weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?”

More than fifty percent (53.7%) said they attend religious services “every week” or “almost every week.” Less than one-third (32.4%) said they attend “once or twice a month” or only “a few times per year.” One out of ten (12.8%) indicated they attend religious services less than that or “never.”

Figure IV-1: Religious Service Attendance

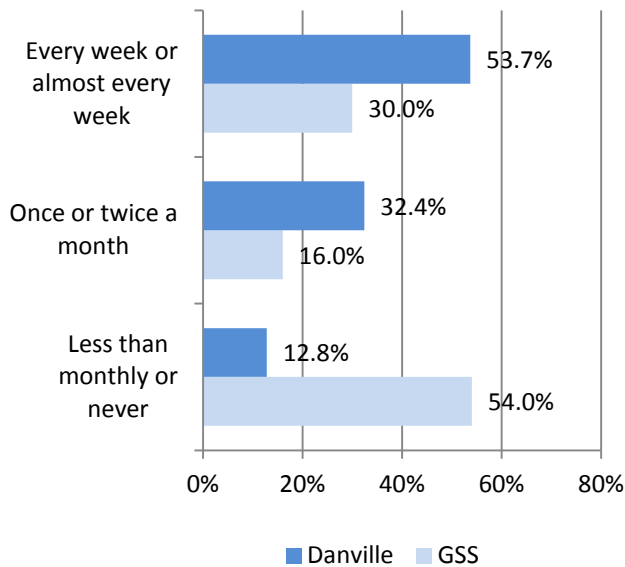


As seen in Figure IV-1, reported religious attendance differed only slightly between the 2009 and 2011 surveys. Specifically, although it might appear that fewer residents are attending weekly, and dropping into the monthly category, there has been no statistically significant change in overall religious attendance between 2009 and 2011. (See Table E-3, Appendix E.) Compared to the 2010 General Social Survey (GSS), a national survey of social trends, Danville residents are significantly more religious.¹⁸

¹⁷ Putnam, Robert D. (1995) *Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital.* *Journal of Democracy* 6:65-78.

¹⁸ GSS 2010 Data rounded to nearest whole percent as archived in the Roper Center IPOLL database.

Figure IV-2: Religious Service Attendance: Comparison to National Data



When asked, “In the last 12 months, have you been involved in any activities related to religious spiritual, or church-sponsored groups (such as a homeless shelter, food bank, church committee, choir, or Bible study group)?” 56.5 percent said “yes” and 43.5 percent said “no.” These results do not represent a statistically significant change from the 2009 survey (See Table E-3, Appendix E.)

Organization Membership

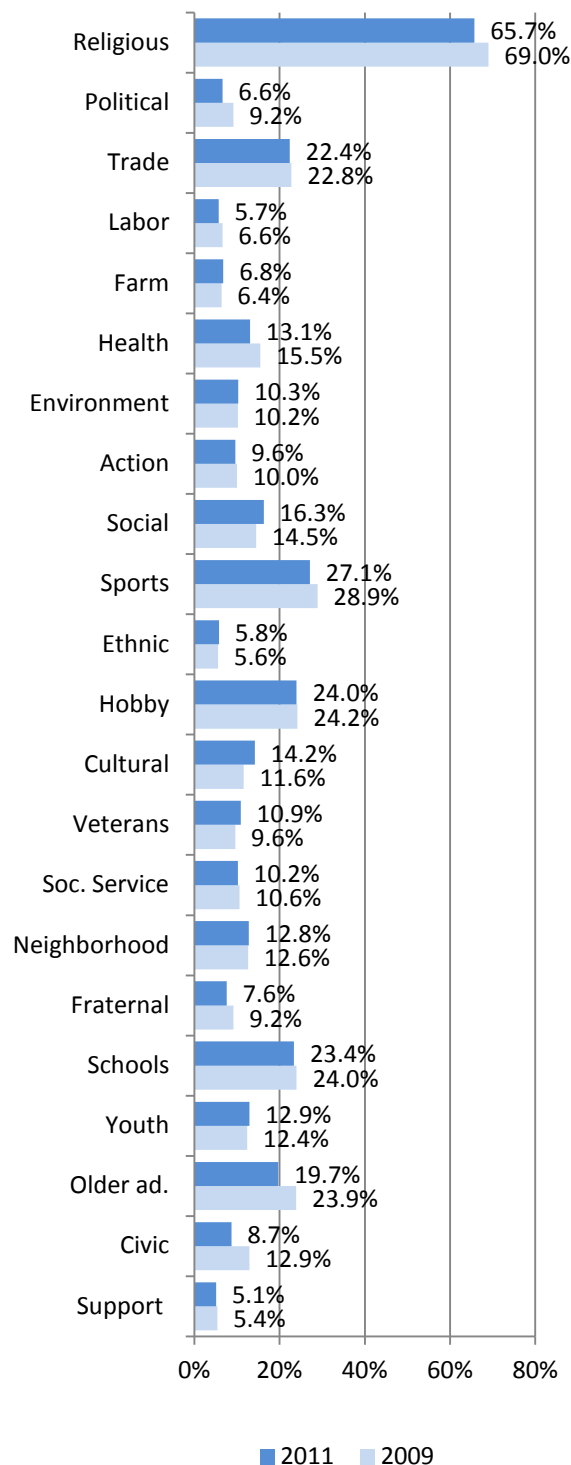
Respondents were given a list of types of organizations and asked whether they have been a member of any of these types of organizations during the last twelve months. Some organizations could be categorized in more than one category so respondents were asked to count each membership in only one category. Membership was defined as having your name on a list of members for an organization which might carry certain privileges such as voting or getting a newsletter, and often involves having a membership card. Making a contribution or supporting an organization does not necessarily always include membership in the organization.¹⁹

¹⁹ This elaborated measure of organizational memberships is adapted from the method developed by Guterbock and Fries (1997), *Maintaining America’s Social Fabric: The AARP Survey of Civic Involvement*.

By far the most common type of organizational membership was religious organizations (65.7%). Other organization types in which people most frequently have membership are; health clubs, sports clubs, etc. (27.1%); hobby, garden, or recreation groups (24.0%); school support groups (23.4%); organizations for older people (19.7%); and professional and trade associations (22.4%). A total of 168 respondents (15.9%) indicated they do not belong to any of the groups. The only groups with a statistically significant membership change since the 2009 survey are the organizations for older people and civic or community organizations, both of which experienced a decline. (See Table E-3, Appendix E.)

Using the community attachment index as an independent variable, an analysis was conducted on the impact of community attachment on group memberships. Community attachment was a strong and positive predictor of membership in religious organizations, farm organizations, health organizations, hobby and recreation groups, social service organizations, school support groups, organizations for older adults, and civic organizations.

Figure IV-3: Group Memberships



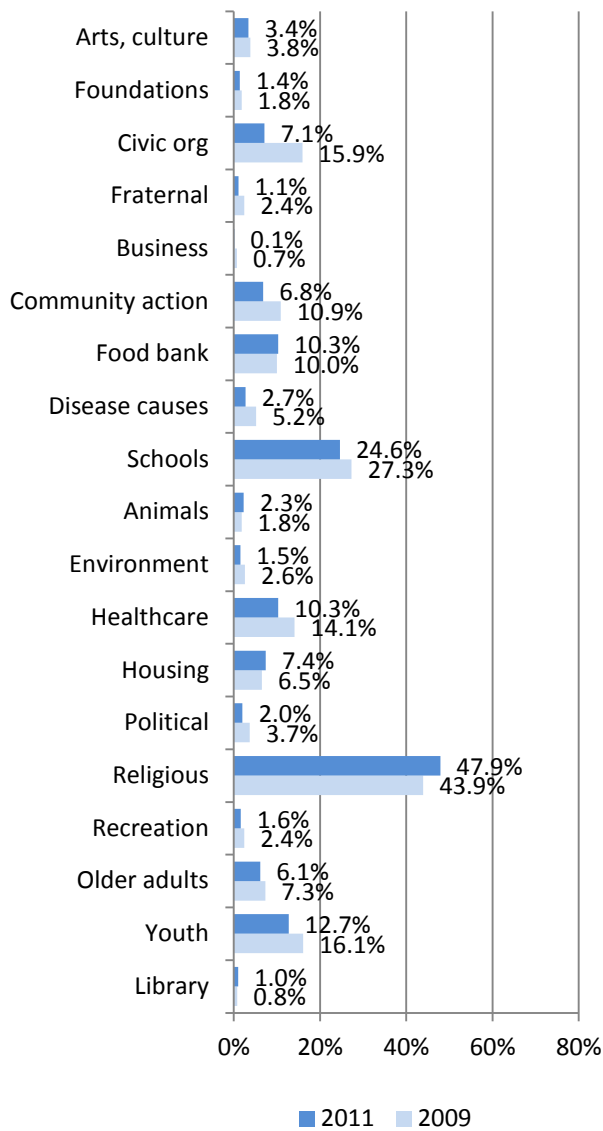
neighborhood associations, and civic or other groups.

As is illustrated in Figure IV-4, of those who volunteered, the area where people are the most likely to volunteer is religious organizations or the church (47.9%). The second most likely area for volunteering is in the schools, education and tutoring (24.6%). In addition, 12.7 percent of respondents volunteered in youth-related activities; 7.1 percent in civic organizations; 10.3 percent volunteer in healthcare organizations; 6.8 percent volunteer in community action groups, and 10.3 percent volunteer in food banks. Again, comparisons to 2009 data are not reported here, but the only statistically significant shift in volunteering occurred in the “other” category, which experienced an increase. (See Table E-3, Appendix E.)

Volunteering

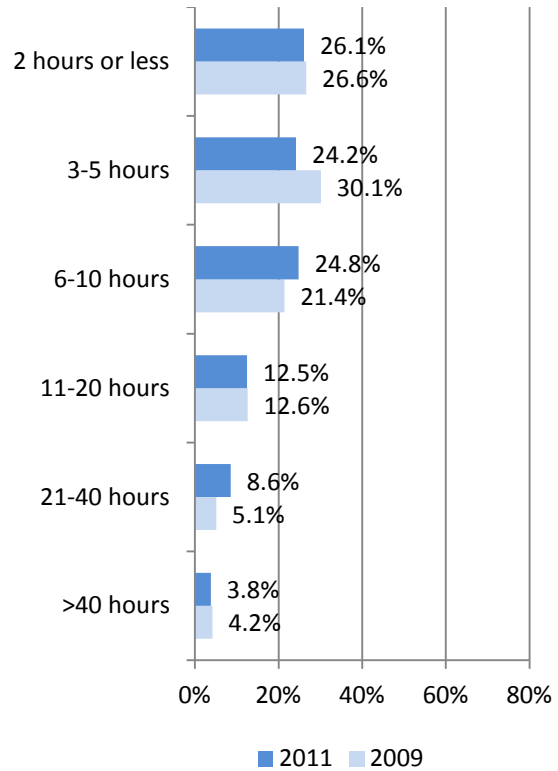
More than fifty percent (54.0%) of respondents said they have volunteered time to charities, schools, hospitals, religious organizations,

Figure IV-4: Types of Volunteering



Of those respondents who do volunteer, more than one-fourth (26.1%) of respondents to the 2011 survey said they volunteer 2 hours or less per month. Slightly less than that said they volunteer 3-5 hours per month (24.2%) or 6-10 hours per month (24.8%). One out of ten said they volunteer 11-20 hours per month (12.5%) or more than 20 hours per month (11.9%). However, about half of the overall sample has not recently volunteered at all. The median number of hours that respondents said they volunteer per month falls in the range of 3-5 hours per month.

Figure IV-5: Hours Volunteered per Month



As seen in Figure IV-5, the data do not show a substantial departure from the 2009 survey regarding volunteer hours. Despite a slight increase to those volunteering either 6-10 or 21-40 hours per week, the change is not statistically significant. (See Table E-3, Appendix E.)

Civic Skills

Beyond membership and volunteering, people acquire many skills through participation in civic organizations. Research suggests that civic skills, communications, and organizational abilities are a valuable resource for communities. Citizens who can speak or write well or who are comfortable organizing and taking part in meetings are likely to be more effective when they get involved in their communities.²⁰

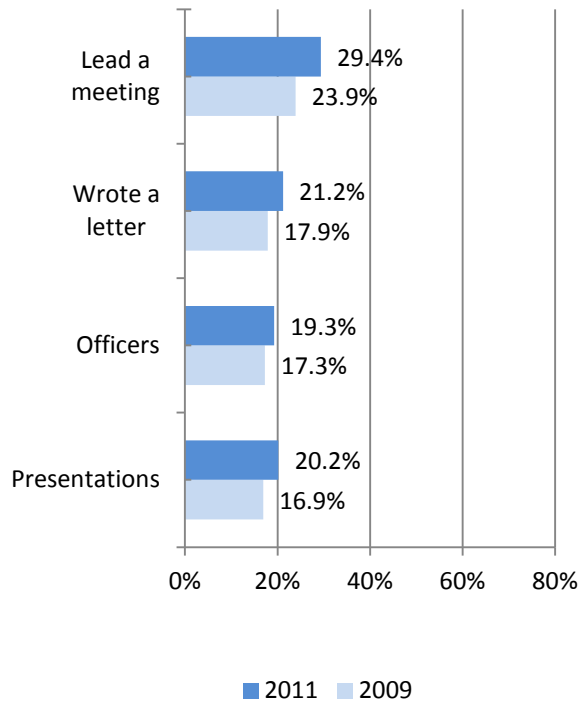
Respondents were asked whether they have ever served as an officer of an organization, helped plan or lead a meeting, written a letter or an e-mail for a group, or made a public presentation. About one in five of the respondents said they had served as officers (19.3%), written letters (21.2%), or made presentations (20.2%). Almost one-third of

²⁰ Verba, Schlozman, and Brady. (2002). *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*.

the respondents (29.4%) said they helped plan or lead a meeting. (See Figure IV-6)

Figure IV-6 illustrates the percent of respondents who participated in these various types of activities.

Figure IV-6: Civic Skills



As Figure IV-6 shows, Danville residents in 2011 appear to be participating more in every category of civic skill-building activity than they did in 2009. However, the only statistically significant increase is in leading a meeting. (See Table E-3, Appendix E.) These changes are positive indicators for future civic engagement in the Dan River Region, as civic skills are important predictors for becoming active in community affairs and local political issues.

Another way that respondents give back to their communities is through charitable giving. One-third (31.6%) of the respondents said they have given more than \$1,000 in the last twelve months to religious and non-religious organizations in their community. Fifteen (15.3%) percent gave \$500 up to \$1,000. Twenty-three (23.6%) percent gave \$100 up to \$500, and thirteen (13.5%) gave less than \$100. Sixteen (16.1%) percent also said they have not given any money to charitable organizations in the last twelve months. These results are not statistically significantly different from the 2009 data. (See Table E-3, Appendix E.)

Demographic Differences in Civic Participation

As in 2009, we conducted statistical tests to determine demographic differences in specific indicators of civic participation. Women are more likely than men to be involved in any type of church-sponsored activities. Women are also more involved in organizations for older people and school support groups, whereas men are more likely to be involved in fraternal groups, farm organizations and veterans' groups.

Blacks in the Dan River Region have a higher involvement in church-sponsored activities. Whites are more involved in professional and trade associations, farm organizations, and environmental or animal protection groups. Whites in the region have a higher participation in health clubs and civic or community organizations as well.

Education and income are significant factors in the types of organizations to which people belong. Respondents with higher education and income are more affiliated with religious organizations and services, professional or trade associations, health organizations, political action groups, health or sports clubs, cultural organizations, social service organizations, neighborhood associations and school support groups. Respondents with higher education or income are also more likely to volunteer.

Overall, people over the age of 64 are more actively involved in religious organizations, as well as religious services and church-sponsored activities. However, the youngest group (18-25) were the most likely to be involved in social clubs, fraternities, sororities and college clubs. Residents between 26 and 49 were those mostly likely to be a part of professional or trade associations and school support groups.²¹

²¹ With the exception of farm organizations, "Young Professionals" are more likely than are other respondents to participate in civic organizations. While this tendency is, not surprisingly, most pronounced when it comes to "professional associations" (with 61 percent of young professionals and 21 percent of others participating) it also applies to, for example, "religious organizations," with 87 percent of young professional and 65 percent of others participating.

Unsurprisingly, residents with children are more likely to be involved with school support groups and scouts or other youth organizations.

Homeowners are more likely than renters to attend religious services and be involved in church-sponsored activities and religious organizations. They are also more likely to be part of professional or trade associations, labor unions, farm organizations, environmental or animal protection groups, health/sports clubs, hobby, garden or recreation groups, veterans' groups, neighborhood associations, organizations for older people, and civic or community organizations.

Residents who are married are more likely than those who have never been married to attend religious services, join religious organizations, and are generally more involved in any church-sponsored organizations. They also join professional or trade associations, political action groups, health clubs, cultural organizations, school support groups, organizations for older people, and civic or community organizations more often than the unmarried. Marital status is positively related to people acquiring civic skills in organizations such as leading a meeting, writing letters for a group, or making public presentations.

Residents of Danville were more likely to be involved in neighborhood associations than those in Pittsylvania County. However, residents of Pittsylvania County were more likely to be a part of civic or community organizations than Danville residents.

Length of residence is positively related to civic participation. Respondents who have lived in the area for more than twenty years are more likely to attend religious services and participate in religious organizations. Overall, homeowners were more likely than renters to be involved in all forms of civic participation. Working part-time or full-time is also positively related to civic participation.

See Appendix C for a more complete statistical elaboration of demographic differences on these items.

V. Political Participation

Political participation gives citizens an opportunity to communicate information to government officials about their concerns and preferences. People have several options for doing this. They can express their views with public officials or by influencing electoral outcomes. They may also give time and effort or money in various political activities. Political participation simply refers to any activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action – either directly or indirectly.²²

General Interest and Attendance at Meetings and Rallies

Respondents in 2011 were once again asked:

“How interested are you in politics and national affairs?”

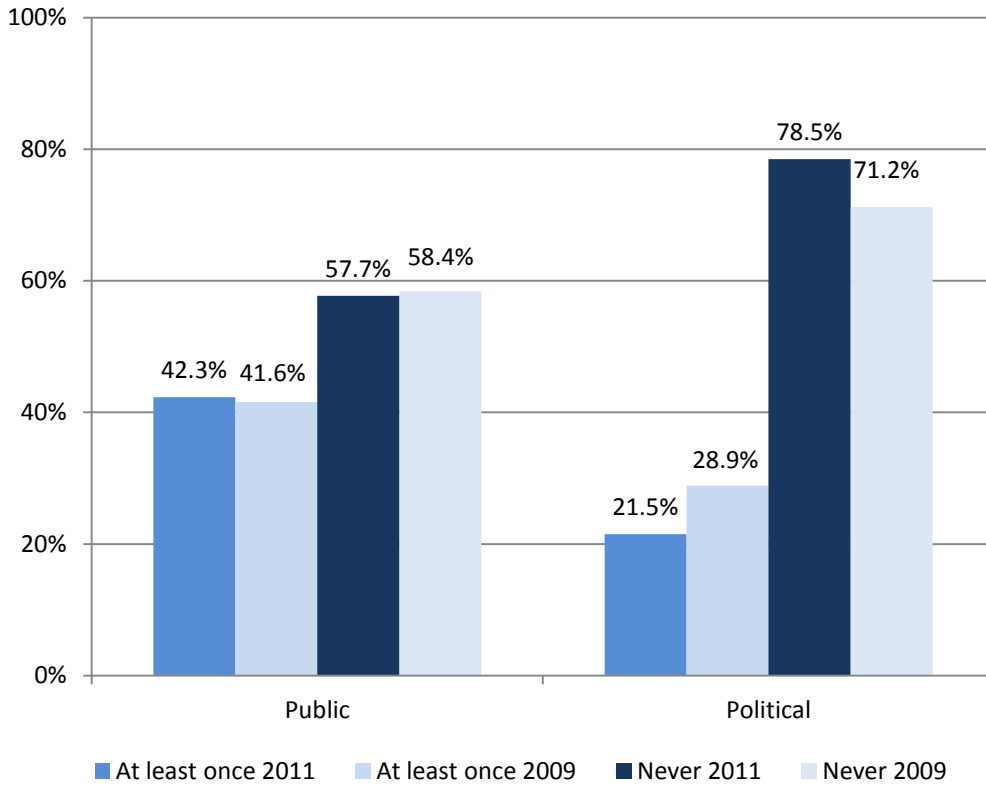
Nearly seventy (68.2%) percent said they are “very interested” or “somewhat interested.” Another 17.4 percent said they were “slightly interested.” About fourteen percent (14.4%) said they have no interest in politics at all. These findings do not show a statistically significant change between the 2009 and 2011 surveys. Appendix E of this report shows the results of testing for statistically significant changes in all substantive items on the survey between years.

Interest in politics can also be measured by considering the level of participation in public meetings where there is a discussion of community or school affairs or attendance at political meetings and rallies. Respondents were more likely to say they have never participated in these activities.

As of 2011, twenty-nine (29.3%) percent said they had attended public meetings “a few times,” and thirteen (13.0%) percent said they had attended a public meeting at least once. Respondents were less likely to have attended a political meeting or rally. A little more than one in ten (11.9%) said they had attended political meetings or rallies “a few times.” Fewer than that (9.6%) said they had only attended a political meeting or rally once.

²² Verba, Schlozman, and Brady. (2002) *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*.

Figure V-1: Attend Public or Political Meetings



As seen in Figure V-1, respondents to the 2011 survey reported having attended a “public” meeting in very similar numbers to respondents from the 2009 survey. However, respondents to the 2011 survey were less likely to have attended a “political” meeting than 2009 respondents. This decline is statistically significant. (See Table E-4, Appendix E.) This change is easily explained: the 2009 survey followed the 2008 presidential election campaign, an effort that mobilized many in the community to become active. The 2011 survey followed the 2010 off-year election, which would be expected to generate less widespread public involvement.

Voting Participation

Elections are scheduled opportunities for citizens to officially register their preferences. Since each voter casts a single ballot and because each vote has equal weight, elections are an equalizing device.²³ Everyone has the same opportunity to express their opinion. As of 2011, nearly nine in

ten (87.4%) of respondents said they were registered to vote, and 86.6 percent of those registered said they voted in the 2010 election.²⁴ Compared to 2009 respondents, who were asked if they voted in the 2008 presidential election, these numbers show a statistically significant decline. (See Table E-4, Appendix E.) However, the percentages for the 2009 survey were higher than those seen in most general population surveys, and they probably reflect the heightened rates of interest and participation that were generated by the highly competitive and historic 2008 presidential election campaigns.

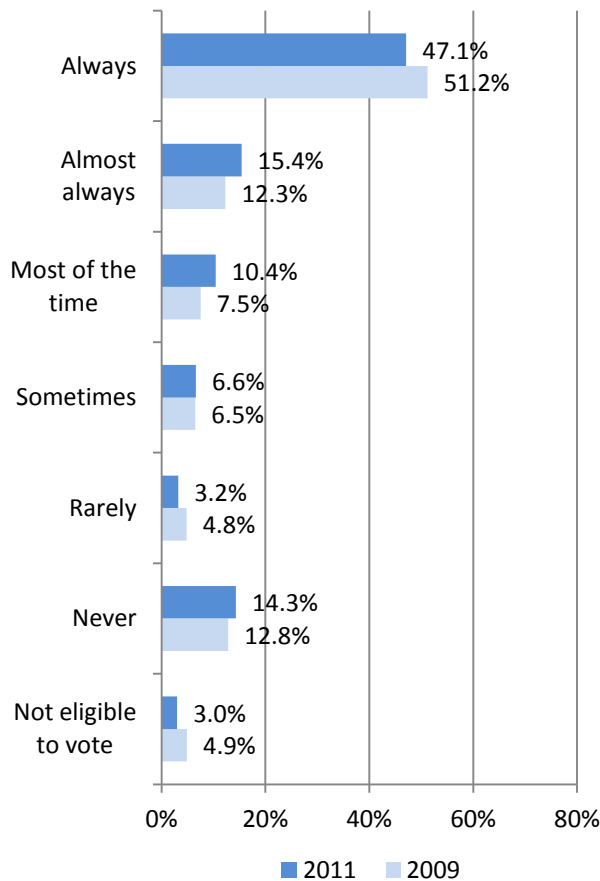
When asked how often they voted in city or local elections, more than seventy (72.8%) percent of 2011 respondents said they voted “most of the

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Presumably because voting is considered a socially desirable activity, many previous studies indicate that survey respondents over-report voting behavior. Interestingly, some studies find this over-reporting particularly pronounced among African-Americans. See Paul Abramson and William Clagett, “Race Related Differences in Self-Reported and Validated Turnout in 1984.” *Journal of Politics*. 48.2. May 1986.

time,” “almost always,” or “always.” Almost half (47.1%) said they “always” vote in city or local elections. Some respondents (17.5%) said they “rarely” or “never” vote in city or local elections. (See Figure V-2).

Figure V-2: Voted in City or Local Elections



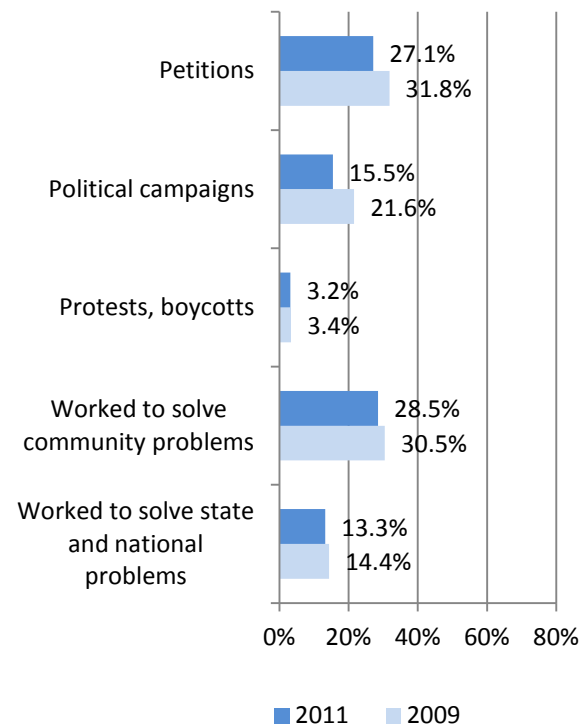
As represented in Figure V-2, these results are not substantially different from those reported in the 2009 survey. (See Table E-4, Appendix E.)

Other Political Activities

There are a number of additional ways in which citizens can be active in their communities and have an influence on governmental decisions. These would include activities such as signing petitions, participating in a political campaign, and participating in a demonstration, protest or boycott. People can also be effective in helping to solve neighborhood or community problems by working together with their neighbors rather than taking on issues individually. Some people also work together to solve problems at the state or national level.

Overall, the results of the 2011 survey continue to suggest that people in the Dan River Region are not very likely to participate in these types of political activities. In all cases, less than thirty percent said they had participated in any one of these activities. As seen in Figure V-3, all of these types of participation would appear to have fallen further since 2009, based on comparison with that year’s survey. However, only participation in political campaigns had a statistically significant decline. (See Table E-4, Appendix E.) This can again be understood as representing a difference between Presidential and Congressional election years.

Figure V-3: Participation in Political Activities



Other Resources to Solve Problems

Respondents to the 2011 survey were again asked:

“Do you have any connections or resources outside the community that you can draw on for help in solving community problems or issues?”

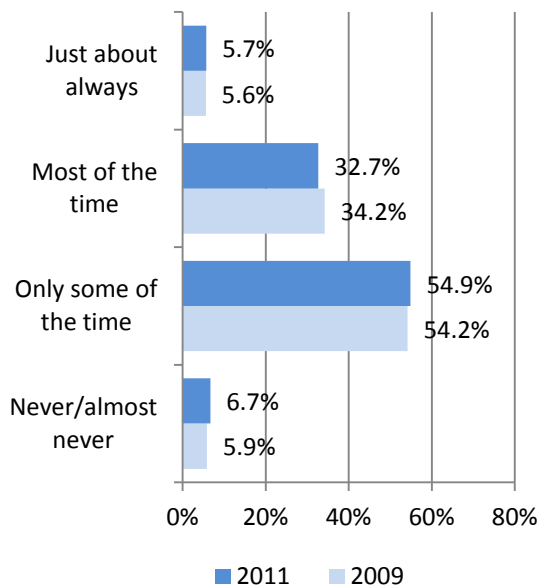
Just over one-fourth (26.6%) of respondents said they have connections or resources outside the community they can draw on for help in solving community problems or issues. Some of the things people mentioned were: friends and relatives, congressmen and elected officials, the internet, local leaders, churches

and religious leaders, and national organizations. These responses were not significantly different from those to the 2009 survey. (See Table E-4, Appendix E.)

Trust in Government

Respondents to the 2011 survey were again asked how much of the time they can trust the local government to do what is right. Only 5.7 percent said that “just about always” they can trust the government to do what is right. One-third (32.7%) of the respondents said they can trust the government “most of the time.” More than half (54.9%) of the respondents said they only trust the government to do what is right “some of the time.” Over six (6.7%) percent said they “never or almost never” trust the local government to do what is right. These findings were not significantly different from results from the 2009 survey. (See Table E-4, Appendix E.)

Figure V-4: Trust in Government



Demographic Differences in Political Participation

Among respondents, those living in Caswell County were most likely to be registered to vote. However, those in Danville were most likely to have voted in the November 2010 election.

Women and black residents were more likely to be registered to vote. Aside from this, gender and race were not significant factors in determining the level of political participation in the community. However, education and income were both positively related to levels of political participation. Residents with higher education are

also more likely to work with the others to solve community as well as state and national level problems. Education and income are also positively related to trust in government.

Older residents are more interested in politics and national affairs, are more likely to be registered to vote, and say they “always” or “almost always” vote in local elections. They are also more likely to have participated in a political campaign. Residents between 26 and 37 are most likely to have connections or resources outside the community.

People who are married show stronger interest in politics and national affairs. Being married is a strong predictor of participation in political campaigns and voting frequency. Those who have been or are married are more likely to say they vote “always,” “almost always,” or “most of the time.”

Home ownership is another strong predictor of interest in politics and national affairs. More than ninety (91.3%) percent of homeowners voted in the November 2010 election and more than eighty (82.4%) say they “always” or “almost always” vote in local elections. They are also more likely to have signed a petition, participated in a political campaign, worked together to solve problems at the state or national level, and have connections to resources outside the community.

Urban or suburban residents are more likely to be involved in politics than those in more rural environments. Among other things they report being more interested in politics, higher attendance for public meetings or rallies, and say they vote more frequently.

Length of residence and employment status are both related to trust in the government and political participation. Long-time residents show a stronger level of trust in the government to do what is right than newer residents in the community. They are also more likely to have voted in the November 2010 election. Those who work full-time are more likely to say they work with others to try to solve problems at the state or national level. Retirees are also more likely to participate in activities at this level.

See Appendix C for a more complete statistical elaboration of demographic differences on these items.

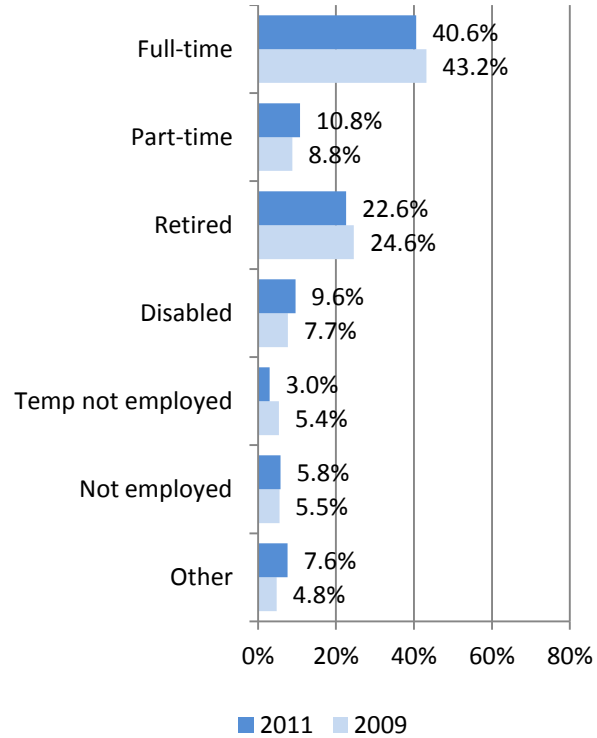
VI. People in the Economy

Employment conditions impact the quality of life in a community and personal employment situations impact the attitudes that residents have about a community. Meaningful employment and the satisfaction people experience in their job can often impact other aspects of community life. Relationships within the work community and the level of connectedness people have with others at work provide needed resources beyond simply compensation for work.

Employment

Only 51.4 percent of respondents to the 2011 survey indicated that they are working full-time or part-time; 40.6 percent were working full-time and an additional 10.8 percent were working part-time. A significant number of respondents were retired (22.6%). Those not employed comprised 9.6 percent permanently disabled, 3.0 percent who were temporarily laid off or disabled, 5.8 percent currently unemployed, 2.4 percent homemakers, 4.5 percent students, and less than 1 percent who gave “other” as their response.

Figure VI-1: Employment



Based on Figure VI-1, it would appear that fewer respondents were working full time, and more part time, compared to those in the 2009 survey. However, overall change is only slight. Appendix E of this report shows the results of testing for statistically significant changes in all substantive items on the survey between years, and there has been no statistically significant change in overall employment between 2009 and 2011. (See Table E-5, Appendix E.)

As of 2011, more than half (50.1%) of residents of the region who were employed work full-time or part-time in Danville City. Twenty-one (21.3%) percent said they work in Pittsylvania County and 4.4 percent said they work in Caswell County, NC. Almost one in five (19.5%) respondents said they work more than one paid job.

One in four (24.3%) said they work outside the Dan River Region. Several indicated that they work in Altavista, Burlington, Campbell County, Greensboro, Henry, Lynchburg, Martinsville, Ringgold, and Rockingham County.

Seven (7.0%) percent said they work more than 60 hours per week on average. One-third (35.3%) average 41-60 hours per week in all jobs including any extra jobs or paid work they do at home, and just under another third (29.9%) work an average

of 40 hours per week. One-fourth (27.8%) of those who work average less than forty hours per week.

Figure VI-2: Hours Worked

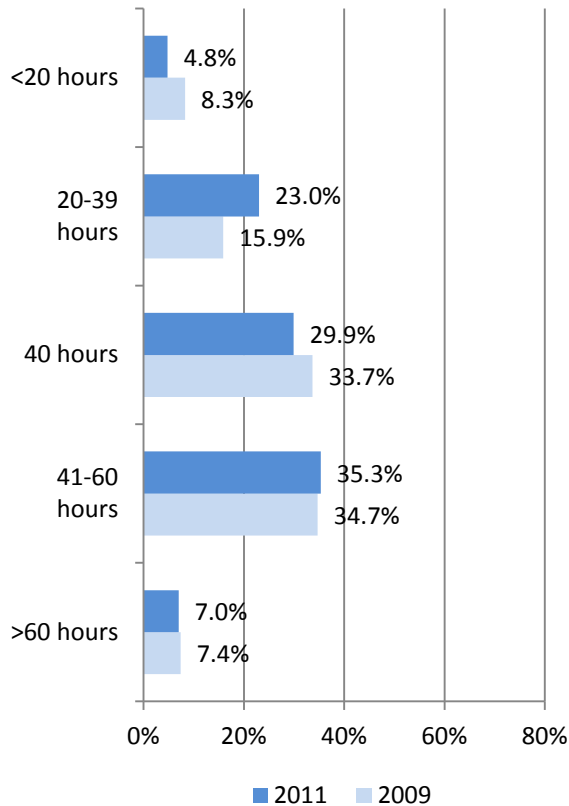


Figure VI-2 compares the 2011 and 2009 surveys on hours worked. Results show no statistically significant change between the two years. (See Table E-5, Appendix E.)

When asked about their commuting time to work, respondents gave answers between one minute and 240 minutes. The average commuting time was approximately 30 minutes. Fifty-six (56.3) percent said they commute fifteen minutes or less to work.

Eighty (80.8%) percent said they commute thirty minutes or less. These numbers do not represent a statistically significant change from the 2009 survey. (See Table E-5, Appendix E.)

Perceptions of Work

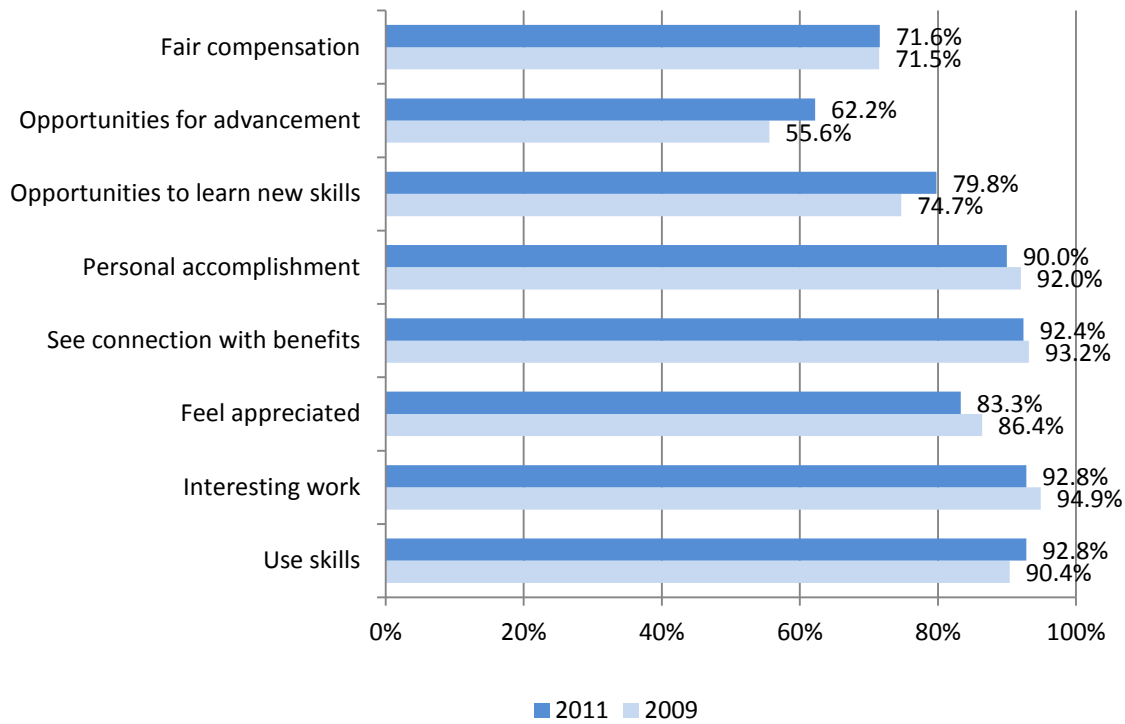
As in 2009, respondents were read a list of statements regarding their perceptions of their work and asked to say if they “strongly agree,” “somewhat agree,” “somewhat disagree,” or “strongly disagree” with them. Overall, the response to these statements, aimed at finding out about people’s engagement with their work and the sense of meaning that they may gain from work, was very positive.

Most respondents agree that they find their work to be interesting (92.8%) and they see the connection between the work they do and the benefits received by others (92.4%). However, respondents were not as positive about opportunities to learn new skills (79.8%) and fair compensation (71.6%). Satisfaction drops further with only under two-thirds of the respondents (62.2%) saying they “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” that they have opportunities for advancement.

The following figure (Figure VI-3) shows the percent of respondents who “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” with the statements regarding their perceptions of work.

The picture that emerges is of a somewhat underemployed labor force. Those who do have jobs are highly engaged with their work and most find their jobs to be personally rewarding.

Figure VI-3: Perceptions of Work



As seen in Figure VI-3, which compares perceptions of work from the 2011 survey to those from the 2009 survey, there is little substantive difference between the two years. Nor is there a statistically significant shift in perceptions of work between the two surveys. (See Table E-5, Appendix E.)²⁵

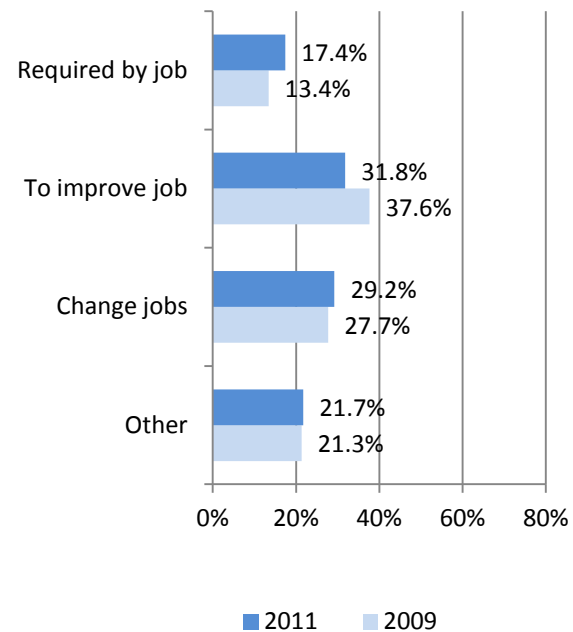
Respondents who are currently employed were asked if they were required to obtain a specific degree or certification other than a high school diploma for their current position. Thirty-nine (39.6%) percent said they did receive a specific degree or certification for their position.

When asked if they would be likely to take a special course if given the opportunity, 60.8 percent said they were “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to take advantage of an opportunity for additional training.

²⁵ By comparison, the 2010 General Social Survey found that about 91 percent of national respondents agreed that their job “lets me use my skills and abilities” and about 86 percent agreed that they are “treated with respect.” Survey results archived in the Roper Center IPOLL Survey database. [USNORC.GSS10E].

When asked what is the one reason that they might get special training, the most popular responses were “to improve their current job” (31.8%) or “change jobs” (29.2%).”

Figure VI-4: Reasons for Special Training



None of these responses regarding special training or certification show a statistically significant change from the 2009 survey. (See Table E-5, Appendix E.)

Economic Situation

In light of the continuing economic situation in our country, respondents were again asked if they had been affected by the recent economic downturn. Approximately two-thirds (66.0%) percent said they had been negatively affected; less than one in four (24.3%) said they had not been affected by the economic situation. Almost one in ten (9.7%) said they have been positively affected in some way by the economic situation of the country.

Figure VI-5: Affected by the Economic Situation

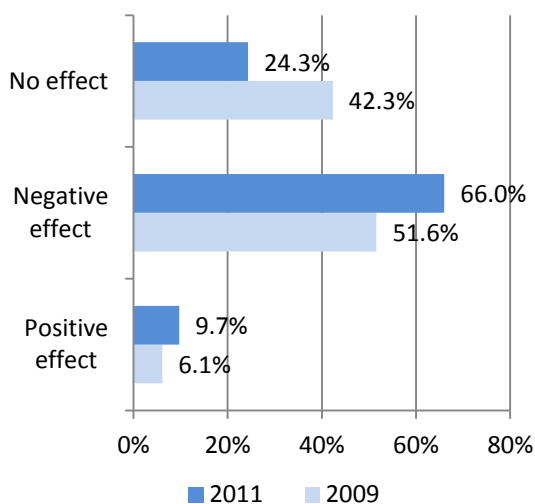


Figure VI-5 compares respondent answers to the economic situation to those from the 2009 survey. As seen above, considerably more respondents in 2011 reported having felt the negative effects of the economy than had so reported in 2009. This increase, with two-thirds of all respondents in 2011 having felt the negative effects of the economic downturn, is statistically significant. (See Table E-5, Appendix E.)

As of 2011, the specific issue that respondents mentioned most frequently in regard to how the economic downturn had affected them was the “higher cost of living due to higher energy costs.” Almost half of the respondents (49.6%) percent said they were affected by the higher cost of living. Almost one-fifth (19.3%) of the respondents said they were affected by a “loss or reduction of income.” Almost one-fourth (23.6%) said it had gotten “harder to pay bills and make ends meet.” “Loss of job” had affected

20.3 percent and 8.1 percent said they “cannot find a new job.” These high figures reflect the severity of the current economic crisis on the Dan River Region.

Compared to the 2009 survey, tests of statistical significance show that fewer respondents are reporting “loss or reduction of income,” foreclosure, or that they “cannot find a new job.” However, more respondents are reporting that it is “harder to pay bills and make ends meet,” a “loss of employee benefits,” and a “higher cost of living,” all increasing by statistically significant amounts. (See Table E-5, Appendix E.)

Demographic Differences in Employment and Experiences with the Economy

As in 2009, we conducted statistical tests to determine demographic differences in terms of employment and economic experiences.

Females were more likely than males to say that they found their work interesting and derived a sense of personal accomplishment from it.

Black respondents were more likely than whites to report opportunity for advancement in their jobs and that they would take a special course if they had the opportunity.

Higher education and income were positively related to job satisfaction by respondents. Higher education was related to feeling that their jobs made good use of their skills and abilities, finding their work interesting, feeling appreciated, respected and valued, and deriving a sense of personal accomplishment. Higher educated and higher income respondents were also more likely to report that their job required a specific degree or certification, and that they would take a special course if offered. Higher income was also related to feelings of personal accomplishment and opportunities to learn new skills.

Young respondents (those in the 18-25 range) reported higher ratings on all assessments of finding meaning in their work, as well as that they would be likely to take a special course if given the opportunity.

Having children and marital status were not significantly related to ratings of the work

environment, although those that have never been married were more likely to take a special course if given the opportunity. More homeowners than renters said their job required a specific degree or certification. Newer residents (less than 2 years) seemed to find work more interesting, feel a sense of personal accomplishment, assess their pay as adequate, and feel that their job makes good use of their skills or abilities. They are also more likely to take a special course if given the opportunity.

See Appendix C for a more complete statistical elaboration of demographic differences on these items.

VII. Children and Schools

One of the concerns expressed by the Danville Regional Foundation was the perception of residents in the Dan River Region about children. How do they rate the quality of education children are receiving, and do people feel that children have to move away from the area in order to make a good living when they have graduated from school?

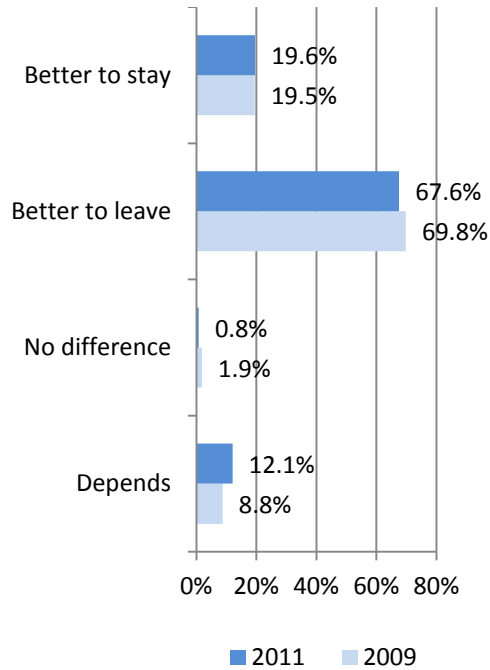
Raising Children

As of 2011, over two-thirds (70.1%) of respondents said that the Dan River Region is a good place to raise children. Of those, 33.6 percent said it is a “very good” place to raise children, and one out of ten (9.9%) said it is an “excellent” place to raise children. However, 29.9 percent rate Danville as being “only fair” or a “poor” place to raise children.

Appendix E of this report shows the results of testing for statistically significant changes in all substantive items on the survey between years. Specifically, there has been no statistically significant change in ratings of the region as a place to raise children. (See Table E-6, Appendix E.)

Everyone hopes for a good life for their children. However, over two-thirds (67.6%) of respondents said when a child from the Dan River Region is ready to leave home, it is better for them to move to some other area. Almost twenty percent (19.6%) said it is better for them to stay in the area. Another 12.1 percent said it “depends.” These responses do not show a statistically significant departure from the 2009 survey. (See Table E-6, Appendix E.)

Figure VII-1: What is Best for Children



During the 2011 survey, respondents were also asked a follow-up question about whether they hoped that a young person who moved away for other opportunities would return to the Danville area, or if it would be better for them to stay away. Almost half (47.4%) hoped that person would return. About two in five (40.8%) thought it would be better for that person to stay away. One in ten (9.9%) respondents remarked that it “depends”. As indicated in Appendix E, open-ended responses regarding the reasons for “staying away” often involved concerns about the lack of job opportunities in the area.

Figure VII-2: Hope Young Person Returns to Work and Raises Family

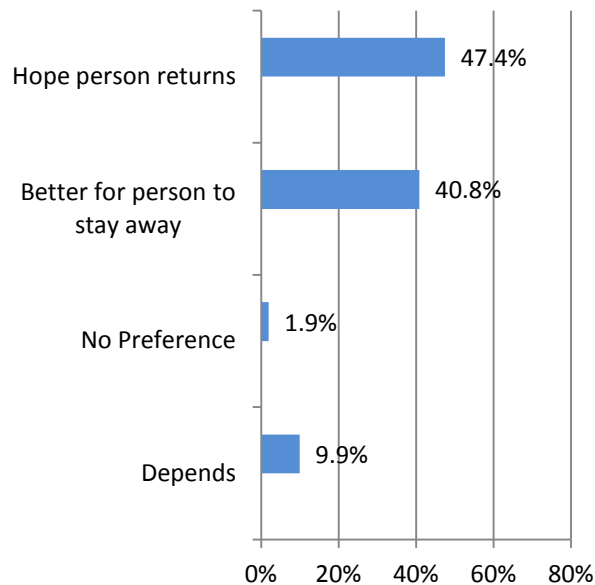
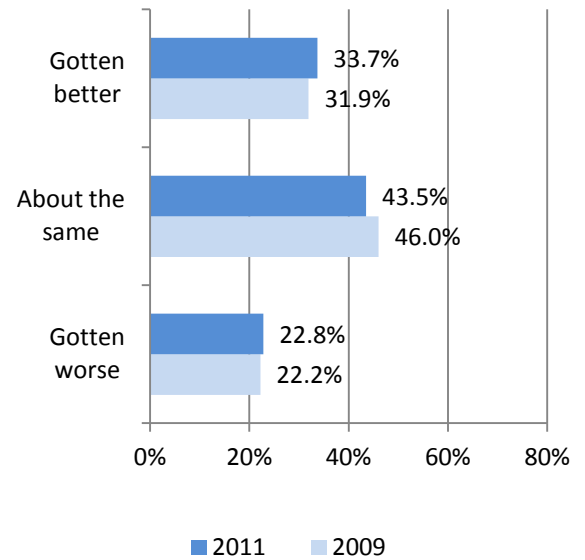


Figure VII-3: Change in Education Provided by Schools



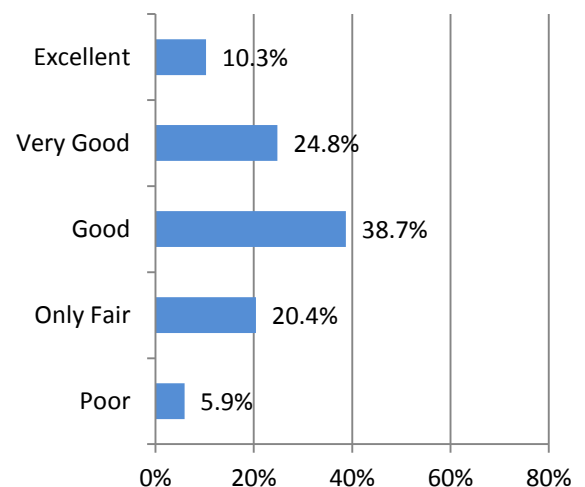
Schools

When asked to rate the education provided by schools in the Dan River Region, more than two-thirds (67.9%) rated the schools “good,” “very good,” or “excellent.” Almost a third (32.1%) rated the schools as “fair” or “poor.” These assessments show a statistically significant decline since the 2009 survey, with parents rating the education received in the public schools worse than they did in 2009. (See Table E-6, Appendix E.)

Respondents were then asked whether the schools have “gotten better,” “gotten worse,” or “stayed the same.” One-third (33.7%) of the respondents said the schools had “gotten better,” and 22.8 percent said they had “gotten worse.” Almost half (43.5%) said the schools had “stayed about the same.”

Respondents were also asked to assess how well the community itself is doing to help prepare children for preschool. About one third replied that the community was doing either an “excellent” job (10.3%) or a “very good” job (24.8%). Over one third alone thought the community was doing a “good” job (38.7%). About twenty percent (20.4%) rated the community’s preparation as “only fair”, and less than ten percent (5.9%) said that the community’s preparation was “poor”.

Figure VII-4: Job Community is Doing Helping Children Prepare for Preschool



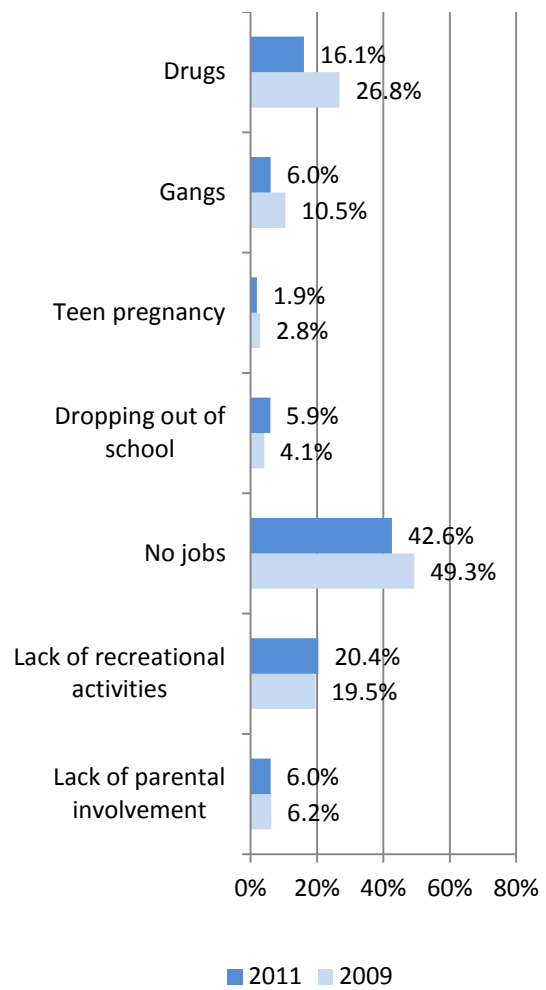
Despite the fall in school ratings from the 2009 survey, Figure VII-3 shows that the perceptions of recent change in education have hardly changed between the two years. Specifically, perceptions of change in education provided by schools show no statistically significant difference between the two surveys. (See Table E-6, Appendix E.)

Respondents with children in the public schools were more likely (73.3%) to rate the public schools as “good,” “very good,” or “excellent,” than respondents with children in private schools or home-schooled. A large majority (73.0%) of respondents with children in private schools rated the public schools as “fair” or “poor.” All of the respondents who home-school their children rated the public schools as “fair” or “poor” (although it is worth noting that there were only 3 such respondents in the sample).

Challenges

As in 2009, respondents were asked to name the biggest challenges facing children and youth in the Dan River Region. Of those responses, the largest category was “no jobs” (42.6%). Sixteen (16.1%) percent of the responses said that drugs are a significant challenge to the children and youth. About one in five (20.4%) listed “lack of recreational activities” as a concern. Over two-thirds (36.8%) selected “other” and listed peer pressure, crime, the cost of getting a college education, lack of role models, unemployment, and racism as some of the challenges facing the children and youth in Danville. Many said there is just not enough for children and youth to do outside the educational system. Figure VII-5 shows the items selected the most. (Percentages add to more than 100% because respondents could select more than one challenge.) In particular, note the decline in “drugs” and “gangs” as particular challenges for children and youth from the 2009 survey: both fell at a statistically significant level. No other changes were statistically significant (despite the considerable gap in regard to the “no jobs” challenge in particular). (See Table E-6, Appendix E.)

Figure VII-5: Challenges for Children and Youth



Demographic Differences in Opinions of Children and Schools

As in 2009, we conducted statistical tests to determine demographic differences in terms of opinions on children and schools.

Residents of Caswell County have a higher percentage of children in public schools than those in either Danville or Pittsylvania County. Residents of Danville were most likely to say that schools have gotten better in providing job skills and skills for college. They also were more likely than those in Pittsylvania county to say that their communities were preparing their children for preschool adequately.

Residents of suburban areas were most likely to have children attending public schools, and to rate the region well as a place to raise children.

Females were more likely to say that over the past five years, the schools have gotten better. They were also more likely to feel that the community was doing well preparing children for preschool.

Race was definitely a factor in relation to the support of public schools. One hundred (100%) percent of the children of black respondents in our sample attend public schools. Almost one-fourth (23.9%) of white residents attend private schools. Black residents were more likely to report that public schools have gotten better generally, and that they have also gotten better at providing job skills and skills for college. They also felt that that the community was doing well preparing children for preschool.

Children of residents with lower education were more likely to be attending public schools, and were more likely to rate the education provided by public schools as “excellent” or “very good.” Renters were also more likely to have their children attending public schools; homeowners were more likely than renters to have their children attending private schools.

Older residents gave higher ratings to the Dan River Region as a place to raise children and rated the education provided by public schools as “excellent” or “very good.”

Married and widowed respondents rated the education provided by the schools as “excellent,” “very good,” or “good.”

Long-time residents were more likely to have their children in private school; those living in the area less than 2 years were those most likely to have children attending public school.

See Appendix C for a more complete statistical elaboration of demographic differences on these items.

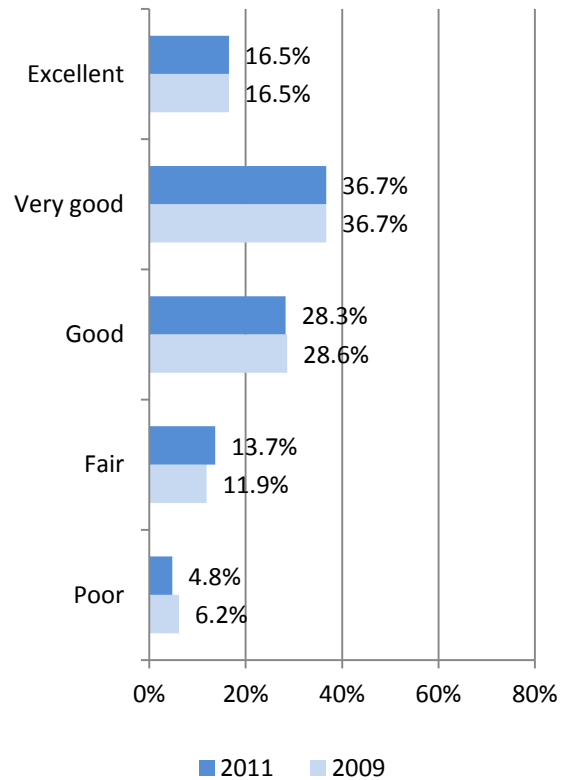
VIII. Health Issues

As in 2009, a supplemental purpose of this survey was to get an overall picture of the health of people in communities within the Dan River Region. The first step was to get the respondents' perspective on their overall health now and compared to one year ago.

Overall Health

For the most part, respondents continue to report that they are in good health. More than fifty percent (53.2%) said they were in "excellent" or "very good" health. Another one-quarter of the respondents (28.3%) said they were in "good" health. Eighteen (18.5%) percent rated their health as "fair" or "poor."²⁶

Figure VIII-1: Overall Health Status



As indicated in Figure VIII-1, respondents' perceptions of overall health status changed only slightly between 2009 and 2011. Appendix E of this report shows the results of testing for statistically significant changes in all substantive items on the survey between years and there has been no statistically significant change in overall health status ratings between 2009 and 2011. (See Table E-7, Appendix E.)

When asked to compare their current health to their health one year ago, 64.1 percent of respondents to the 2011 survey said that their health was about the same as one year ago, and 20.2 percent said their health was "somewhat better" or "much better" than one year ago. Fourteen (13.9%) percent said their health was "somewhat worse" than one year ago.

²⁶ Since 2005, comparable national health questions archived in the Roper Center IPOLL database have used a four-point rather than a five-point response scale. For example, among respondents to the 2010 General Social Survey, 27 percent characterized their health as "excellent," 46 percent characterized their health as "good," 22 percent characterized their health as "fair" and 6 percent characterized their health as "poor." The most recent nationally-archived question that used a five-point response scale similar to that on the present survey is a December 2005 Kaiser Family Foundation poll question which found that 22 percent of respondents characterized their health as "excellent" and 37 percent as "very good." Results based on 1202 telephone interviews conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates. Archived in the Roper center IPOLL database [USPSRA.06HPRF82.R08].

Figure VIII-2: Health Comparison to One Year Ago

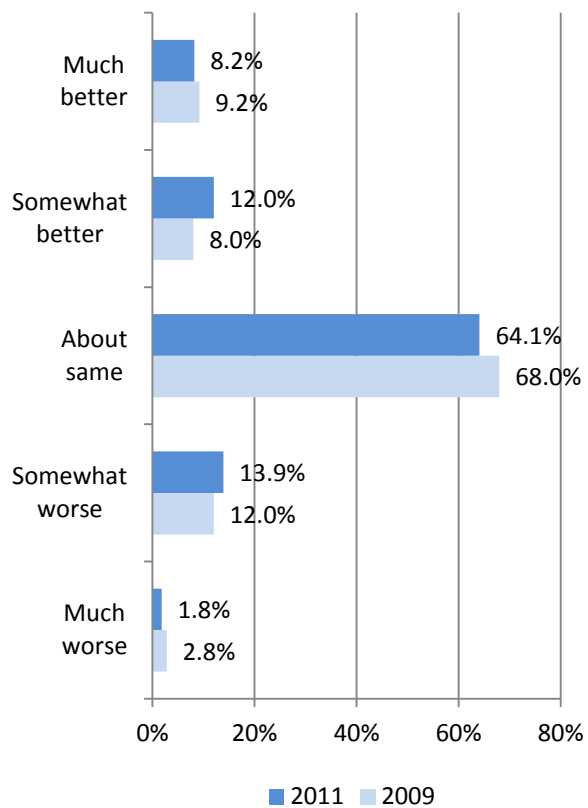


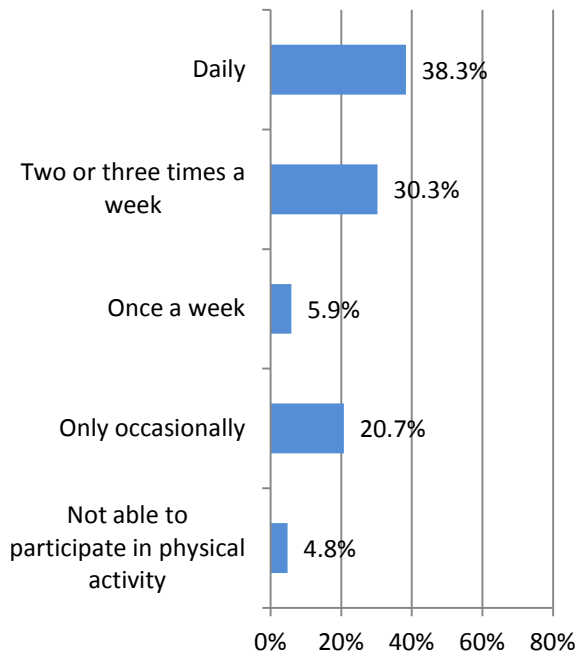
Figure VIII-2 compares responses to this question to those from the 2009 survey, and shows little substantive change. Nor is there any statistically significant difference between the two years. (See Table E-7, Appendix E.)

Physical Activity and Problems with Obesity

In the 2011 survey, respondents were asked a series of questions regarding their own physical activity levels, as well as their perceptions of obesity as a problem, both for within their communities and their households.

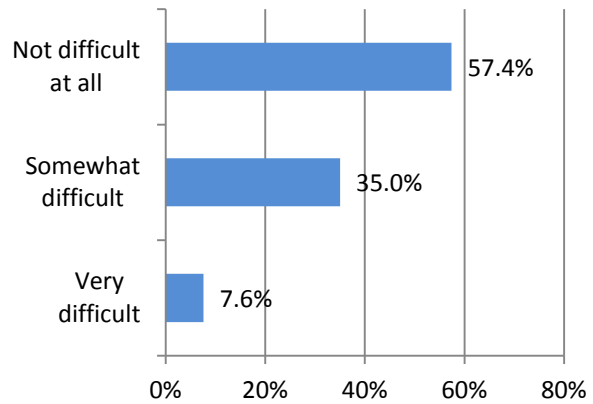
Respondents in Danville tended to report being fairly active. Over a third (38.3%) reported engaging in physical activity daily. Another third (30.3%) reported being active at least two or three times a week. Only 5.9 percent reported exercising only once a week. However, one in five respondents (20.7%) reported “only occasionally” engaging in physical activity, and another five percent (4.8%) reported not being able to participate.

Figure VIII-3: Participation in Physical Activity



Good nutrition is also important for healthy living. When asked how difficult it was to eat a healthy diet, over half (57.4%) responded that it was not at all difficult. Just over a third (35.0%) reported it being “somewhat difficult” to maintain that diet, and less than one in ten (7.6%) reported that it was “very difficult”.

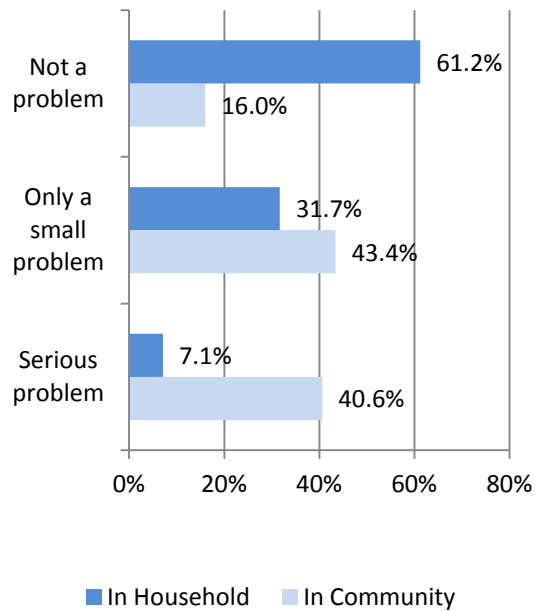
Figure VIII-4: Difficulty in Eating Healthy



When asked whether obesity was a problem in the community where they lived, 40.6 percent responded that it was a “serious problem.” The largest proportion, at 43.4 percent, noted that it was “only a small problem.” Only 16.0 percent reported that it was “not a problem.”

However, many fewer respondents saw obesity as a problem in their own household. Under one in ten (7.1%) saw obesity as a “serious problem” in their household. Roughly a third (31.7%) responded that it was “only a small problem,” and over half (61.2%) thought that it was “not a problem” at all.

Figure VIII-5: Obesity as Problem



Of those who reported that obesity was a serious problem in their household, over three-quarters

(76.6%) reported that they had the resources to deal with this problem. Of the resources reported, the most frequent responses included the internet, exercise equipment, their doctors, support of friends and family, and their own willpower. Just under a quarter (23.4%) reported that they were not equipped to handle this problem.

Demographic Differences in Health Indicators

There were no significant differences regarding overall health status by geographic areas. Nearly eighty percent (78.6%, 83.8% and 80.4% for Danville, Pittsylvania County, and Caswell County, respectively) of respondents in all three geographic locations said their overall health status was “excellent,” “very good,” and “good.” Residents in both Danville and Caswell County were more likely to report problems eating healthy than those in Caswell County.

Men were more likely than women to see obesity as a problem in the community, but women were more likely than men to see obesity as a problem in the household.

Black respondents were more likely than white respondents to report that their health has improved. White respondents were more likely to see obesity as a problem in the community than black respondents.

Younger individuals (especially those in the 18-25 category) were most likely to be engaged in regular physical exercise.

Education and income are positively related to higher ratings of overall health status. Younger residents also reported better health status, as did those who own their own home (rather than rent), and those who were either married or never married (compared to those who were separated or widowed). Higher educated individuals were also more likely to be involved in physical activity, and to see obesity as a problem for both the community and the household. Higher income was related to perceiving obesity as a problem in the community.

Those in suburban or rural environments experienced better health than those in living in the city, a small town, or out in the country.

Length of time as a resident did not show significant differences between groups.

Work status is also positively related to better overall health status. Those who are working full-time or part-time were more likely to say they have “excellent,” “very good,” or “good” overall health than respondents who have been laid off or are retired. Unemployed respondents were most likely to view obesity as a problem in their household.

See Appendix C for a more complete statistical elaboration of demographic differences on these items.

IX. Summary and Conclusion

The preceding sections of this report describe the various factors that have been identified as contributing to the level of social capital residents perceive in the communities in which they live, and to the vitality and capacities of the community as a whole.

The 7.31 satisfaction mean rating for quality of life in the Dan River Region (rated on a scale from 1 to 10) is an indication of the high regard the residents have for the quality of life in the Dan River Region. This rating remained nearly the same as reported in the 2009 survey.

Although residents of Caswell County and Pittsylvania County continue to rate the quality of life higher than those who live in Danville City, the gap between city and surrounding counties has narrowed considerably since 2009.

Long-time residents continue to be concerned about the quality of life in the Dan River Region in the future, and continue to look back favorably on the past. Here again, however, the gap between optimism about the past and pessimism about the future has narrowed considerably since 2009.

Community Attachment

Overall, residents of the Dan River Region continue to have a strong sense of community. The results of the 2011 survey show few changes from the 2009 survey in terms of social capital, and what changes have occurred do not all point in the same direction.

For example, while respondents in 2011 rated the importance of feeling a sense of belonging to community somewhat lower than they had in 2009, they also rated their sense of personal safety in the community significantly higher. Respondents continue to feel a sense of belonging and continue to feel it is important for them to live in this particular area. Most residents have neighbors or relatives in their neighborhood or close by to support them. They also feel they have an impact in making their community a better place to live. Although the community score on a general index of community attachment declined significantly

from 4.16 in 2009 to 3.79 in 2011, the magnitude of this change is in part an artifact of the way in which the index was constructed (see the detailed discussion in Chapter 3).

Civic Participation

Civic participation likewise remained relatively stable between 2009 and 2011. Volunteering, group membership, involvement in schools and involvement in religious organizations all remained fairly stable. There were no statistically significant decreases in civic participation, and the only statistically significant increase in civic participation involved those who said they had led a meeting.

Political Participation

Compared to 2009 respondents, who were asked if they voted in the 2008 presidential elections, the number of residents saying they had voted in the 2010 midterm elections shows a statistically significant decline, yet this may simply be the result of less interest in a midterm election cycle. Political participation otherwise remained relatively stable, although, as in other communities, participation in politics by means other than voting is much less common than is voting itself.

People in the Economy

Although changes in employment throughout the Dan River Region were not statistically significant, it appears that fewer responders were working full time and more were working in part time positions, compared to those in the 2009 survey. One in five respondents said they work more than one paid job.

When respondents were asked about their perceptions of their work, the picture that emerges is of a somewhat underemployed labor force. Those who do have jobs, however, are highly engaged with their work and most find their jobs to be personally rewarding.

The economic situation of the country continues to have an impact on the Dan River Region. Significantly higher numbers of people in 2011 said they have been negatively impacted by the downturn in the economy than was expressed in 2009. 2011 respondents are systematically more likely to mention the higher cost of living,

difficulty paying bills, and a loss of employee benefits, but they are systematically less likely to mention job loss, foreclosure, or loss of income.

Schools and Children

More than two-thirds (70.1%) of respondents continued to say the Dan River Region is a good place to raise children and to have a favorable opinion (67.9%) of local schools. Although overall assessments of schools declined to a statistically significant extent since 2009, the proportion of respondents who felt that schools are getting better increased, and respondents expressed fewer worries about drugs and gangs in schools than they had in the previous survey.

As in 2009, approximately two-thirds of respondents (67.6%) continued to say that when a child is ready to leave home, it is better for them to move to some other area. In a new question asked in 2011, however, a plurality expressed a hope that their children will return to the Dan River Region in the future.

In the opinion of our respondents, the biggest challenge affecting children and youth in the Dan River Region is the lack of jobs, though this was less of a concern in 2011 than 2009. Respondents showed strong support for quality education and youth education programs to provide a better quality of life for their children and youth.

The result of the work the community is doing in the area of early education to prepare children for school is difficult to assess with reference to 2011 survey data alone. Although approximately three in four respondents feel that the community is doing a “good,” “very good” or “excellent” job of early education, it may take a couple of years for this work to have a significant impact.

Health Indicators

Health indicators questions on the 2011 survey are often different from those on the 2009 survey. There was no significant change from 2009 to 2011 in self-reports of overall health. In a new set of questions, about 41 percent of residents see obesity as a serious problem in the community; this perception is more widespread

among whites and those with higher incomes. Only seven percent say obesity is a serious problem in their household. About a quarter of this latter group say they lack resources needed to address the obesity problem.

Conclusion

Any assessment of social capital in the Dan River Region must recognize that some forms of civic engagement are closely correlated with socio-economic status. In a region suffering from economic setbacks, lack of education and income among residents will have an effect on how involved they are in civic life. Taking these factors into account, overall the level of social capital is fairly strong in terms of community attachment, social connectedness and religious involvement, but in need of development in areas of civic engagement. There are some encouraging signs of change in the way residents perceive their quality of life, and in the growth of some key civic skills. This survey thus points to areas, subgroups and arenas of activity where the Dan River Region may be able to improve the level of civic engagement, the strength of social capital, and hence, the quality of life for its residents.